

WIRE

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Sam Rivers Steinski's Jukebox

Christof Migone
Marc Almond
Rocket From The Tombs
Thomas Brinkmann
John Zorn
Bohman Brothers
Oslo's new Improv set
Thomas Buckner
Musée Mécanique
Cex

SONIC YOUTH

12 page special

Interview and record guide from Cex, John Zorn & Jex
to All Tomorrow's Parties

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Editor's Idea

I've never been one for outdoor festivals, and I speak as someone who once had his trousers nicked at Glastonbury. I was hooked on big live gigs until one fateful night at Kilburn Ballroom in North London, when, as I stood enraptured in the front row of a crowd watching Sonic Youth, a hopeful state diver trod on the top of my spine in an effort to climb on stage, bending my body in half, and the whole world went black for ten minutes that felt like an eternity. Perhaps it was the combination of all these things (for the fully grisly story, see my forthcoming autobiography, *Reports From Uranus*) that led to an enthusiasm for the more sedate environments for listening that emerged in the 90s post-club landscape: electronic lounges, sound installation exhibitions, sit-down open affairs... Not that I've been boycotting good, old-fashioned rock shows, but the mischief? Just don't wanna go there. Still, not usually one to make New Year resolutions, if I made one in all for 2002 it was: Must get out more. Sometimes, the volume of work required to pump this magazine out each month, and the amount of music you live with through the working day, leaves you every evening panting for the anechoic chamber. But now that the year is getting underway, live music seems

much more of an exciting prospect than it was last year, for some reason. Perhaps it's the rest of events which have already been announced: John Zorn's premiere of *The Gift at London's Barbican* this month; the just-out details of London's *Ether Festival* (See Out There!); the perennial *Sonar* in Barcelona; upcoming *Tumblebumps* in London and California; intriguing reports from California of the *Jewelled Antler Collective's* metamusic improvisations; whispers of Gary Lucas's incredible tribute to Captain Beefheart, *Fast 'N' Bulbous*.

But before all of these comes the triple marathon of All Tomorrow's Parties. Produced by the superhuman efforts of Barry Hogan and his colleagues, ATP began as a quintessentially English affair at Camber Sands, a seaside holiday camp, but has rapidly swelled to international status, taking place this month at UCLA in Los Angeles (under Sonic Youth's curatorship) and twice in April at Camber Sands (your host: Steve Albini). Meanwhile, a Tokyo leg has just been announced for the autumn. The strength and diversity of the LA line-up, which features everybody from Cecil Taylor, Destroy All Monsters and Tony Conrad to Aphex Twin, Boredoms, Patches and Cannibal Ox, has been

enough to inspire a party from *The Wire* to decamp to LA for the duration of the festival, and if any readers are going along to UCLA, we'll be delighted to welcome you to our stand.

The ATPs in California and Kent already look set to be the year's defining tribal gatherings, so no excuses for this month's 12 page special on LA curators Sonic Youth. Where so many others have lapsed into self-parody or retrofitted formula, SY have succeeded in making difficult musics accessible. Further, they have unselfconsciously championed experimental forms while appealing to stadium sized audiences, and preserved the serious character of art music while taking it out of its traditional academic context, rather than vice versa. Finally, they have allowed rock 'n' roll to retain something of its mystical as well as kinetic energy over their 21 year history.

Two decades are a long time, which reminds me: The *Wire* is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2002. We'll be making an announcement about our plans to mark the occasion later on in the year, so keep this frequency clear, as Steinski once said (or sampled). Oh, and I was kidding about the autobiography

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Letters should include a full name and address



Three cool rock chicks listening to *Nes??: Le Tigre*

Mad for it

I've been a regular reader of *The Wire* since issue 17. I know you have declared the Radiohead correspondence closed, and rightly so. However, I am reminded of *The Wire* 88 (June 1991) and Richard Cook's editorial which offered justification for putting Michael Jackson on the cover... hard to believe people are still getting into the cover... hard to believe people are still getting into a latter ten years later over cover stars. I would have thought your stance would be pretty evident by now.

I enjoyed Ben Watson's Tangents article on Music's Lunatic Fringe (*The Wire* 216), even as a 'psychic oppressor'. Being a mental health nurse, it's good to see the Whittington psychiatric services getting a bit of (rare) praise from the punters, even though Hugh Metcalfe's recollections date back 15 years. Just a quick *repe*, however: hasn't Vervan Weston got his own wires crossed a bit when he refers to 'Tavistock Institute reward/punishment theory'? The Tavistock Clinic is the *ne plus ultra* of psychoanalytic theory and practice, and would, I'm sure, be deeply miffed at even sharing the same sentence with 'behaviourism'.

Trevor Barre London, UK

Chinese whisper

I am a Chinese woman, and I am also a musician and recording artist who is fascinated by Gary Lucas's work. His guitar has an intimate and very sensitive tone surrounding the vocals. He focuses on each note with the precision of someone who not only operates in the moment, but who also understands a nostalgic 'Drehtat' concept of music.

Concerning Hua Hsu's review in *The Wire* 216, I feel

his objection to Gary's use of the term 'Oriental' in his liner notes was definitely overblown, as was his assertion that Gary's 'relationship to Chinese women' was somehow non-PC. However, I'm happy to see that we do both agree that *The Edge Of Heaven* is a great record!

Min Xiao Fan New York, USA

Contre le sexisme

Le Tigre on the cover (*The Wire* 215)! How great! Here I am already feeling optimistic for 2002. As my first year's subscription winds down, I give many thanks as your magazine continues to inform and intrigue what and how I hear. These efforts that make up *The Wire* are very much appreciated and enjoyed.

Ticia Downie Edmonton, Canada

Rooting for dub

I am very sad and disappointed that Dub Syndicate's *Acres Of Space* album is not on the list of the best dub and roots records of the year 2001 in *The Wire* 215. The records on the list are great, except the *Now Thing* compilation – in my opinion a very bad and terrible record – but please, do not forget most of them are just compilations and from the glorious past of sweet reggae music, not from the present. Nowadays, when in reggae (almost) everything is *disco* that, I think that what Style Scott and company do is really unique and respectable. And where is the respect to Dub Syndicate? Sorry, nowhere, I know it is just a personal and subjective thing, but it pains me.

Tibor Vizler Hungary

The name game

I read with great interest Mike Barnes's article on UK group Sand (*The Wire* 215). Then I got that telltale whiff of mental dissonance when I recalled an identically named German outfit circa 74, whose *Golem* album was and is a much-loved Krautrock artefact. Call me a nitpicker, but even if a group is no longer operative and its name is theoretically up for grabs, shouldn't we expect of newer artists a bit more effort or research in selecting their monikers? The prior Sand is hardly obscure, as United Dances reissued the album along with additional material as a two CD set in 1996. (Seems that David Tibet and Steven Stapleton were as smitten by Sand as the rest of us.) It all smacks of laziness on the newcomer's part. Oh well, I understand that *The Beatles* is available these days as well...

Fred Mills Wadesboro, USA

Arcane fact

Regarding the *Flussdichte* CD by Treichsens/Myers reviewed in *The Wire* 213 by Chris Sharp, please know that David Lee Myers is Arcane Device (not 'worked with' – it's a one-man project) and that this is their third split CD, the previous two being *DBL*, *FD&R* and *Speiseleitung*. Yes, it was a matter of time for this collaboration, but the time already came long ago.

Massimo Ricci Rome, Italy

Rap on the knuckles

Here's a plea from a longterm reader: I'm wondering why you continue with the Outer Limits page of reviews

Letters

when the entire Soundcheck section has turned into one long Outer Limits column. When was the last time you devoted a full page review, or even a long Soundcheck review, to a Hip-hop or breakbeat or dub album (and I don't mean Rhythm & Sound, who are cool, but Germanic Industrial types by any other name)? Instead, you now seem to think that only the most esoteric, obscure, impenetrable, 'of interest to the musician and his dog' only experimental music is worthy of promotion to full-blown review status. I can't be the only reader who was blown away by that killer Def Jax story (The Wire 208), and ever since has been left drooling for more. But since then, what? Nothing, or not much.

The main reason I started reading The Wire was because you wrote about Hip-hop, drum 'n' bass, Techno, etc better (MILES better) than just about anyone else I can think of. So what's changed? The music (especially Hip-hop) is still out there and still sounding light years ahead of anything else being produced right now (that's what The Wire's supposed to be about, right?) and you still have some of the best writers on Hip-hop anywhere. Isn't it about time you let Hua Hsu, Peter Shapiro, Dave 'what planet is he on?' I don't know, but I wouldn't mind living there! Tompkins, Kodwo 'what planet has he moved to?' Eshun loose, to fly freestyle ALL OVER the map, not just hidden away in the back pages? If you don't, then this is one reader who might just have reached his (outer) limit with your reviews policy.

Tim Bainbridge via email

Seeing red

As soon as I see in The Wire the obscure Marxist reference and the anti-capitalist slant, I am most certain I am reading a Ben Watson article. Please put this anachronistic fossil out to pasture along with his ideology. In fact, I'd be willing to pay him off – in true free-market fashion – to get him to go away. Thank you.

Jim Hankenian New York, USA

Daydream nation

First of all, congratulations on this fine publication's independent status. This no doubt benefits everyone involved, contributors and readers alike. Total independence and autonomy really appear to be the only way a publication such as yours can ensure a future free from the glut of commercial escapism that

is swallowing much of the music press both here in the US and abroad. Having the determination to go independent is a sign of your dedication and belief in the ability for music and the related arts of true individual character to survive (and flourish) even in the current international social/political climate.

I can honestly say that, more than any time I have been witness to (yes, even the Reagan years), America is in desperate need of art of genuine value, expression, intellect and challenging individual voice. Without it, the rest of us who haven't given Bush the media-advertised '90 per cent approval rating' would be lost in a drone of pop-con-celebrity benefit concerts and a propaganda machine that is bent on dividing this country into a black and white dystopia of true patriots and terrorist sympathisers.

This publication has been one of the misuses from the world of critical thought and values beyond the commercial agenda in the past few months. Shaming company with such events as Sugar Rios live (they toured in the midst of it all in September/October) and David Lynch's profound Mulholland Drive. The Wire has been a resource into a world that is a true alternative to the morose, sad, infatuated and tragic psycho and social state this nation is currently absorbed in. So, thank you. Keep up the exceptional work. We need it more than ever.

Jefferson W Petrey Seattle, USA

I feel a few words are in order in defence of Ben Watson, who has come under criticism on recent occasions in the Letters page, most notably from David Beorn (The Wire 214) and Jeff Capshaw (216). Both these letters refused to accept any vaguely anti-American sentiment. At a time when many of the contributors to the magazine were 'playing safe' with ultra-PC statements about 11 September, Watson's Pros & Cons proved to be some of the most refreshing reading. While most of the world seems to be falling over itself to offer fawning sympathy to Bush and friends, we need writers like Ben Watson with the courage to continue to criticise and scrutinise America, a country with, arguably, a global stranglehold. Why on earth should he have to justify himself – should any traces of genuine, impassioned political comment be brushed out simply to satisfy the few disgruntled American readers?

To his discredit, though (on a different note), was the recent Marx Nite at London's Victoria & Albert Museum (organised by Watson), seemingly an organisational shambles unworthy of Schwitters's great name – or

was it all a deliberate ironic statement? I'm sure it wasn't Watson's fault directly, but subtle acoustic improvisation and poetry hardly seem suited to the crowded atrium of the V&A. With regards to the audience, it's a shame that they couldn't even feign silence for the likes of Bob Cobbing and Simon Fell. Jonathan Jones via email

Stokes city

This might be a few issues (or a little more) old [a whole year back, in fact – Ed], but in the review of Neil Hagar's self-titled solo album (The Wire 206) I believe the reviewer stated Neil covered Frank Stokes's 'Chicken Can Roast Behind The Moon'. In fact, the two songs are completely different and (perhaps by homage?) just share a title. However Royal Trux, I believe, covered Frank Stokes's 'Mr Crump Don't Like It'. Although I do have to admit I haven't heard Stokes's version of 'Mr Crump' so I can't be sure. Hopefully some Stokes covers will come out of this apparent fad; 'T'ant Nobody's Business' is crying out for a cover.

Andrew Jones via email

Rock harder

If we are going to see groups like Radiohead and Mercury Rev on the cover of the premier experimental music magazine in the world, why not give some space to the folks truly altering 'rock' music. Presocratics or Volcano The Bear or the Saz Handle axis are all intelligently pushing the idiom until breaking point. The second Presocratics release for Table of the Elements, Presocratics Serve Imperialism, did not even get a review. I want more.

M Barber Atlanta, USA

Corrections

Issue 216 The contact info for Masayoshi Urabe's Unlking CD on Tiliqua, reviewed in Soundcheck, was not included in the Directory. They can be reached at tiliqua@pb.be or tiliqua@belgaom.net; T/F DD 32 32813974 or 00 32 32187921.

Issue 214 In Avant Rock, Harkunen's Grizz album on Hydra Head Industries was wrongly billed as Hankunen by Grizz. In the Directory, Without Fear Recordings' old Web address was mistakenly printed. The current one can be found at www.purpleman.com. □

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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Most definitely English music: Hugh Davies

The latest issue of MIT Press's *Leonardo Music Journal* is devoted to experimental English music. Subtitled *Not Necessarily 'English Music'*, the collection of essays features contributions from Nicolas Collins, Michael Parsons, Alvin Lucier, Eddie Prevost, Hugh Davies, Robin Rimbaud, Janek Schaefer, Joe Banks and David Toop on a wide range of subjects from The Scratch Orchestra to contemporary sound art. To accompany the Journal, David Toop has compiled a two CD package of English experimental music from the 1960s, also titled *Not Necessarily 'English Music'*, and featuring Cornelius Cardew, Dagmar Gram, Hugh Davies, Michael Nyman, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Michael Parsons, Max Eastley, AMM, The Scratch Orchestra, Intermodulation, The People Band and Gentle Fire. Released by EMF Media, the CD is available both with the Journal (from mitpress.mit.edu/LMJ) or as a stand alone release >> The judging of the 16th annual **Prix Ars Electronica**, Europe's premier competition for the electronic arts, takes place in April in Linz, Austria. A total of EUR 100,000 in prize money will be awarded across the categories of computer animation, interactive art, Web design and digital music. The deadline for submitting entries to the music competition, which was won last year by Ryoji Ikeda, is 31 March. More information is available online at prizes.arte.at >> If you're dying to know the reason **Royal Trux** broke up, run, don't walk, to your nearest indie emporium and pick up a copy of *The Adventures Of Royal Trux #10*, a new comic book published by Onag City with words by **Nell Michael Hagerty** and art by Gordon Kirchner. In true Marvel style, the book lays out the world tale behind the group's dissolution, with some intermissions along the way from Hero/Zero and Victory Champ >> Or if you've really got money to burn,

why not shell out EUR 350 on *News About Music And Art Number 1*, a very limited edition monograph featuring **Jim O'Rourke's** photos of Japanese women getting their bags caught in the doors of subway trains in Tokyo? The book is published by Sweden's Neon Gallery Brosarp (www.neongallery.nu) >> And even more underground press collector's items: The third edition of the *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal* is out now. Dedicated to, ahem, cunninglingus, the zine features purple prose from Byron Coley, Thurston Moore, Richard Meltzer, Richard Hell, Eileen Myles, Lynne Savitt, John Sinclair, Tuli Kupferberg, Mike Watt and Clerk Coolidge. >> The **Contemporary Music Network's** new UK touring season kicks off in May with Turntable Hell, a self-explanatory package of some of the world's most diabolical deck hands curated by Canada's Martin Tétreault. Subsequent tours in the season, which is once again supported by The Wire, include BEAST's electroacoustic realisation of Morton Feldman's collaboration with Samuel Beckett, **Worlds And Music**, Steve Beresford directing The Oedication Orchestra, and a collaboration between Spring Heel Jack and The Matthew Shipp Quartet. More info at www.mortours.org.uk >> Stirling will once again stake a claim on Scotland's cultural landscape with **Le Weekend**, a festival curated by Wire contributor David Keenan. The event takes place between 25-28 April and the programme is split equally between New York free jazz and Tokyo psychedelia, including David S Ware, William Parker, Shuzuku, Maher Shaleh Mesh Baz and Keiji Hara (solo and with Fushitsusha). For more info go to www.stirling.gov.uk/leweekend >> Between 11 April-28 July, San Francisco MoMA presents **Sampling/Christian Marclay**, an exhibition devoted to the New York turntable artist. The show will feature the *Tape Fall* installation, which aims to transform sound

into a visible presence, a newly commissioned DVD piece entitled *Video Quarter*, and a screening of *Up And Out*, a synchronisation of the visuals from Antonioni's *Blow Up* with the soundtrack and dialogue of Brian DePalma's *Blow Out* >> **Meta Music Network**, a partnership between Generator, the Arts Council of England, the Musicians Union and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, was launched on 11 February. The Website (www.metamusic.org.uk) aims to be a one-stop resource for musicians and independent music organisations by providing information on funding, health and safety issues, tips for promoters, copyright information and minutes of industry conferences >> The ever expanding All Tomorrow's Parties festival empire has just announced a Japanese instalment of the all-singing, all-dancing, all-candigan-wearing indie bane, curated by **Autechre**. It will take place in late September in Tokyo >> The revival of interest in British folk music continues apace with Toop's May release of a four CD box set, **The Acoustic Folk Box**. The collection moves roughly chronologically from Lonnie Connegan's "Jack O'Diamonds" to Eliza Carthy's "10,000 Miles", taking in Shirley Collins, The Incredible String Band, June Tabor and Richard Thompson along the way >> America's National Public Radio's Lost & Found Sound is organising **The Sonic Memorial Project**: The Life And History Of The World Trade Centre And Its Neighbourhood, a collection of audio artefacts that will be made into a series of radio specials, exhibits and on-site memorials. Anyone with personal memories, vocalised messages, private recordings, corporate videos, etc interested in contributing to the project should contact NPR's Sonic Memorial Hotline (001 202 408 0300) or email info@sonicmemorial.org >> Send Bitstream items to trawler@thewire.co.uk

Death Row

How would Alec Empire spend his last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

Three records

Alec Empire: *Intelligence & Sacrifice*
Merzbow: *Ikobukuro Oede*
Sun Ra: *Media Dreams*

One film

Logan's Run

One book

The Bible

Three visitors

The three Ases of Evil

Last meal

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Living monkey brain Chinese style - but the risk of me not living is too big perhaps...

Final message for the world
I came into this world to fight God. And I loved every minute of it - I reached enlightenment through noise, so I'm not scared, because what awaits me on the other side is greater than everything that earth was able to offer. I'll see you in the next round...

Music for the funeral
Nic Endo: "Les Sacrifices"
Helen Ellis: "The Fight Goes On"
Alec Empire: "Parallel Universe"
Intelligence And Sacrifice is released in April on OHR

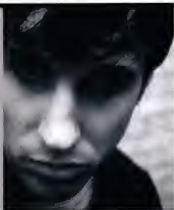


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Ryan Kidwell can pinpoint the moment when he stopped being Cex the burgeoning IDM prodigy and became Cex the self-proclaimed "#1 entertainer" cum enfant terrible of the American electronic underground. It was April 2000 and Kidwell's skitswing, melodic tracks had won the then 19-year-old an oddball gig opening for a doggy rock group at a posh hotel bar high above his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland.

"I sat behind my laptop and played these songs that I really liked and really worked hard on," he recalls. "And I was just sitting there, watching my friends and watching these people I didn't know watch me. And I thought, 'This is not me at all.' I really wanted to own the music more than just sitting here and being the guy who made it. After that show I promised myself I was never going to play a show like that again. I didn't care if I just put the music on 'play' and ran around, I was going to do that. And so I did."

True to his word, at his next show (at New York's Knitting Factory), he leapt up from behind his laptop and made a spectacle of himself, racing around the stage, dancing, launching impromptu spells and leading off and response chants. Although recent releases such as the *Stanshop Galactica* EP (on the 555 label) and *Oops, I Did It Again* (on Kid606's Tigerbeats) still feature plenty of the tuneful electronic bopsongs spangled with acoustic guitar that made his early reputation, Cex live appearances are now full-on 21st-century showbiz. And a bit of boisterous beats, freestyle rhyming and rowdy egotripping, he bridges stand-up comedy, electronic music, performance art and HipHop. For Kidwell, the difference is obvious: "People don't have to convince themselves it was a good show."

Cex is one of a growing number of pupils in a new American school which includes close friend and ally Kid606, Lësser, Hrvatski, Maruman and Blectum From Blechdom—all artists with strong roots in underground rock and electronic music who've happily jettisoned the sacred and overly precious tenets of both. "I think our

attitude about ambition, accessibility, and fun makes us tangibly different from the bulk of European and pseudo-European IDM," Kidwell asserts. "And we definitely learned a lot of what not to do from DIY punk's underachieving and often elitist ethos. We bring a more down to earth attitude, a better sense of humour, more showmanship and the ambition to make what we do meaningful to more people than just our immediate peers."

Kidwell's own musical roots are buried in his father's extensive David Bowie collection, plus his own stints in a series of teenage rock groups. But an impulse purchase of Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Vol II* led him to electronic music in 1995. Since he spent much of his high school years stranded in his parents' basement in a rural enclave near Baltimore, he had plenty of time to hone his knob-twisting steez. At 17 he founded his own Underscore label and released his debut album, *Cex Sells* (1998), which quickly established him as a fully fledged member of the American IDM underground. If at first he embraced the scene, he soon found it too insular. "People who want to use their music as a moat to keep the peasants at bay," he jokes, adding that he found too much of the music "more process-oriented than outcome-oriented". He continues: "I listen to it and all I can hear is a very impressive night of programming some patch that was then turned on and let run for five minutes. A lot of guys, if you want to talk to them about a song, you're going to talk to them about a program, not some inspiration."

A longtime HipHop fan, Kidwell's own musical inspirations eventually drifted from the likes of Squarepusher to the likes of Timbaland and Swizz Beats. Meanwhile, his live freestyle rhyming, which began as a goof, grew more and more intense. Soon after the release of his 2000 Tigerbeats debut, *Role Model*, he conceived an album that would feature his favourite indie-Hop MCs rhyming over his beats. Scheduling difficulties alone forced him to reconsider

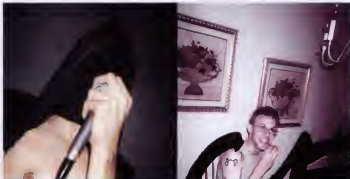
the idea—and the realisation that it would put him back behind his laptop sunk it for good. He remembers thinking, "It's probably the wrong idea, very presumptuous, a big mistake for me to assume myself—people would have a problem with it. But that's why I should do it. Playing it safe isn't interesting."

Thus was born *Talk, Dark And Handcuffed*, a straight-up Cex HipHop album straight outta Baltimore, due on Tigerbeats this spring. The result isn't likely to convince any Jay-Z fans to sign onto the Cex mixing list, but it reveals just how far Kidwell has come since he used to be his own ad hoc hype man. *Talk* is full of nimble lyrics and artful beat crafting, without sacrificing either his "#1 entertainer" persona or the intelligent goofball behind it. "I think the kneejerk reaction is going to be, 'He's a white MC, he says something about gong platinum, he's got gold teeth—he's a joke!'," Kidwell admits. "But I think five minutes with the lyrics would dispel that. There's definitely a lot of anti-intellectual messages on the record, but they are messages: you can have fun with music, it doesn't have to be a terrible thing if you smile at a show. It doesn't devalue an artist because he made a joke one time."

Even before his MC Cex set his record bins, Kidwell is already preparing an album of contemplative, beat-laced, guitar-based songs called *Bung Ridden* for Baltimore-based Temporary Residence Ltd this summer. He's aware that some of his listeners may balk at yet another whipsaw change of direction, but he remains sanguine about his career to date, regardless of where he takes it from here.

"If I've done anything right, it's been being unabashed and unashamed and saying, 'Here's all these horrible mistakes I made, here's me flying by the seat of my pants, here's the bad attempt at a John Waters movie I tried,'" he concludes. "I'm not trying to pretend it's anything more than me and my goofy attempt at art and a career and stuff." □ *Talk, Dark And Handcuffed* will be released on Tigerbeats in April

THE ENTERTAINER. BY LEE GARDNER





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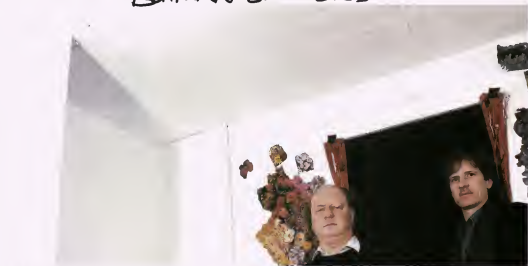
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SIBLING REVELRY. BY BEN WATSON

BOHMAN BROTHERS



Twisted: Adam (left) and Jonathan Bohman

Describing the sequence of tracks on The Bohman Brothers' new CD *A Twist For All Pockets*, Jonathan Bohman uses a cinematic analogy: "The introduction — which we called 'Bonded Dip' — is a descent into the world of the Bohmans, rather like in a David Lynch film, where someone has a heart attack, and [Lynch] takes you right down into the grass where the guy fell."

London's Bohmans have a taste for the eccentric. Jonathan has been working on his own recorded projects for the last 20 years. His brother Adam, two years older, has had wider involvement with other musicians. Originally introduced to London's experimental music scene in the early '80s, with workshops at the Cockpit Theatre led by composer Ian McQueen, Adam was an early member of Morphogenesis. Roger Sutherland's team of desktop improvising noisemakers. In 1993, he played Derek Bailey's Company Week as part of Conspiracy, the Gothic Improv quartet led by keyboardist Nick Coudry, whose his homemade amplified strings were crucial to the group's echoic, sinister soundworld. The first time this writer saw him perform solo, he was outside artist Richard Crow's *Institution Of Rot* (a house installation in North London), scraping the kitchen windowpane with a pitchfork, and whispering through a microphone that he was going to take everyone down to the basement for slow torture and slaughter. Adam's spoken word tapes — recorded *in situ* in a laconic civil servant drawl with stutters on initial 'c's — are legendary. A fine example, alternately hilarious and terrifying, concludes *A London Compilation*, issued in 1995 on Clive Graham's Paradigm Discs label.

Jonathan Bohman declares that an original inspiration was The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, a rare outburst of Dadaist satire within the '60s underground. He also lists various pop auteurs as influences: "I was attracted to that hermetic world of people doing their own thing in

the studio, rather than groups. It appeared romantic to me. People like Frank Zappa — even though he had groups, it was all his own soundworld — Todd Rundgren too, and Prince. Stevie Wonder was another: people who both produced and played. For me the result had a very concentrated feel to it."

Jonathan describes "Dneiro" — the twisted heart of *A Twist For All Pockets* — as the "fever dream" of a prism string quartet. As one might guess from their non-classical backgrounds (Adam cites Electric Light Orchestra, Mahavishnu Orchestra and Henry Cow as early favourites), The Bohman Brothers are not enamoured of the 'acoustic instrumentation and straight recording' puntism that persists among some improvisers. However, post-production isn't a matter of disguising imperfections, more of bringing recording media into glaring focus. "Dneiro" is a delirious listen, as the two brothers' different contributions fight and merge on the multitrack, while they add their homemade string instruments at a live performance in Glasgow.

"What we're not so interested in doing is using familiar samples," Adam comments. "Instead we're thinking in terms of the timbres of various instruments. If we want a viola sound, we'd go to an LP that had a viola, but we wouldn't use a particular phrase that would ring bells in people's minds. On 'Dneiro' there's 12-tone viola mixed in with much earlier music from the cells."

For the last three years, The Bohmans have been hosting regular music nights at the Bonnington Centre in Vauxhall Grove, South London. So far they have promoted more than 60 concerts, providing one of the key venues for experimental activity in London. Many of the musicians who play there overlap with those who play at the Klinker, Hugh Metcalfe's club on the Hackney/Islington borders, but there's a difference.

Sets are longer, there's less spoken word and songs, it's altogether more musical — DIY Darmstadt rather than DIY cabaret, perhaps. Jonathan: "Once or twice I've been phoned by people — God knows why — who've said, 'I want to play the Bonnington, I've got these songs', and it's obvious they'd be better off playing somewhere else. They haven't really got the idea that the Bonnington is for experimental music."

Nevertheless, the two clubs are complementary, and The Bohmans hope to be part of a mooted 'Klinker Club On Tour' package. Their efforts have paid off: the brothers have appearances lined up into mid-year, plus five concerts in Holland in April.

It is hard to describe the raw, explosive audio art they perpetrate. Everyday objects and sounds are worked on until they become saturated with lurid suggestion, resulting in a bizarre, hysterical immediacy. The convulsive beauty of "Dneiro" bears comparison to both composers James Dillon and Helmut Lachenmann and to sound terrorists Furt and Barkl. Nevertheless, in the best traditions of Bonzo Dog, The Bohman Brothers' kitchen sink realism laughs at the grand claims of lofty art. They will show you fear in a sponge from the drainer.

At one point, Adam Bohman was making sculptures by imitating plastic debris in his parents' back garden. Paul Obermayer, the samplist from Furt, received a tape cassette with a bubous plastic excrescence on the side. After a week, the plastic went 'horrible' and insects started creeping out of it. Alarmed, Obermayer phoned Bohman: "What was that you sent?" "Oh," came the reply, "it's a ham roll I covered in melted plastic." Finally, an image adequate to The Bohmans Brothers sound. *A Twist For All Pockets* is out now on Rossini. For details of The Bohmans' club nights at London's Bonnington Centre, which changes name every month, see *Out There*

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"I enjoy erasing myself, though I retain a kind of presence," says Swiss-born sound artist Christof Migone, now based in New York. Soft-spoken almost to the point of inaudibility in person, on record he gives the impression of being just barely there even when he's singing. On *Escape Songs*, a collaboration in progress with Canadian singer Veda Hille that features rare vocal performances by Migone, the duo's voices hang by less than a thread—hesitant, fragile, afraid or unwilling to make a commitment. With nevertheless close making bringing every lip smack into relief, the recordings are strikingly pure and almost uncomfortably intimate. Yet Migone and Hille frequently drift out of the frame, as if they were unaware that their private voice games and uncoloured electronic noodlings were even being observed.

Fragility is a state that particularly interests Migone—specifically the fragility of the human mind, body and language capability. His recent performance piece *Evasion* involved him attempting to stick his tongue out for nine minutes. Like going for extended periods without sleep, such an act pushes the body into an unfamiliar, uncomfortable and somewhat precarious state. "Evasion lets the muscles of the tongue and jaw take over," Migone explains, "or at least come onto the surface, interacting with the message that my conscious is sending me throughout: 'Get this tongue back inside!'" A video recording of the piece, showing only his tongue, with Migone himself retaining a shadowy presence, documents his physical struggle to resist his brain's warnings, saliva dripping involuntarily from his mouth.

Much of Migone's work revolves around issues of control and lack thereof, and the struggle between the two. "In our constant attempts to rein ourselves in, things invariably slip," he says. "But the slippage is perhaps more an excess than a lack, or paradoxically both, as in a leak." Among the "leaks" that have long interested him are speech disorders and vocal accidents, normally unacknowledged or prettified for

public presentations. His 1996 CD, *Hole In The Head*, which contains out-put and processed voices culled from his longrunning phone-in radio show on Montréal's CKUT, was inspired by écrits bruts (writings of the insane) as well as psycholinguist Roman Jakobson's studies of aphasia. Replete with all manner of gasps, groans, sputters and cries of anguish, the disc's 61 short collages approximate a kind of aural schizophrenia, offering a disquieting reminder of just how thin the dividing line between "normality" and "madness" is.

The recently released *Crackers* CD, which collects recordings of people cracking various parts of their bodies (knuckles, back, knees, etc.), is another study of this control/lack of control dialectic. To Migone, the tension and release inherent in the decision to crack or not reflects in microcosm the tension between order and chaos in the larger world. Sometimes a joint insists on being cracked, and if ignored it may crack itself anyway; an uncracked joint can also make it painful for you to stand up, thereby forcing you to crack it. While *Crackers* is ostensibly a much simpler sound project than the incredibly dense, obsessively cut and layered recordings that comprise *Hole In The Head*, Migone says it's "just obsessive in a different way". Indeed, wanting to ensure the cracks sounded real, it took him three years to complete the CD's basic recordings. "Paradoxically, the [initial] recordings were too successful," Migone recalls. "They instantly sounded like digital glitches. Yet retaining the somatic reference was the crucial element." Without any prior knowledge, however, it's difficult to identify exactly what the fumes of apparently electronic clicks actually are. Finding out can be a shock. "One of the things that interests me in the work," he says, "is that moment where one realizes that these are sounds of joints cracking; sometimes the resulting cringe produces a cognitive dissonance, and that movement against the grain of one's enjoyment and preconception enriches the work."

Produced during his years living in Montréal, where he collaborated with such radio art luminaries as Dan Lander and Gregory Whitehead, Migone's radio work also went against the grain. Well, the way he heard it, he was attempting to resuscitate what he perceived to be a virtually lifeless medium. "Radio voices are dead on arrival... well-combed and articulated... air-dried and dehydrated," he wrote in an article for the recently published collection, *Experimental Sound And Radio* (edited by Allen S Weiss for MIT Press). In his own work, Migone sought to banish the antiseptic, hyper-articulate speech that dominates radio. In its place, he positively embraced the imperfections and unpleasantness that make up communication in everyday life. He also tried to break down talk radio's standard host/caller relationship: "I was really trying to have a total contrast from talk radio and say, 'I'm not going to play the role of radio host, not going to present a topic of the day, not going to monitor how long you talk as a listener.'"

He provided open phone lines, sometimes leaving the studio and letting callers talk among themselves, or calling in from public phones to join the discussion like any other listener. The unmediated and often intensely personal tone of his show even attracted a stalker. He recalls, "I was so much trying to bypass this mass communication thing by being very intimate on the radio, and that probably didn't help matters. Also in some ways my voice, not only its tone but also the bareness in which I presented it, somehow triggered something in her."

Migone may be flirting with yet more danger with his forthcoming *Crackers* video, in which he plans to put himself in the frame, filming himself recording people cracking their joints—a very close and intimate process. More than the audio version, he concludes, "it's much more about the relationship. I mean, have you ever seen a chiropractor crack someone's back? It's actually very sensual." □ *Crackers* is out now on Locust. Website: christofmigone.com

CRACKED IN THE HEAD. BY DAVE MANDL



MUTABLE FEAST. BY JULIAN COWLEY

THOMAS
BUCKNER

"Essentially, I'm trying to do things that I feel really strongly about and that no one else is going to do," says singer Thomas Buckner, an impassioned and adventurous performer and promoter of American music in the slipstream between modern composition and jazz. He's talking about Mutable Music, his recently launched record label, but such enthusiasm characterises all aspects of his work over the past three decades. The label supports composers attuned to improvisation, including musicians with a jazz background. Pianist Muhai Richard Abrams, bassist Mel Graves and drummer Jerome Cooper already feature in the catalogue.

Mutable also revisits Buckner's previous recording venture, 1750 Arch Records, based in Berkeley, California. "The 1750 Arch project began with a concert series in 1972," he recalls, "I was trying to reflect non-commercial musical activity in the Bay Area: unusual classical music, some World Music – Indian, Chinese, Japanese – early music, electronic and experimental music and some jazz, although we were in a residential neighbourhood and agreed not to use a trap set." Soon he was presenting up to four concerts a week for ten months of the year in a cheaply adorned house which had been unoccupied since the 1950s. Attendance was restricted to 50 people, but a small recording studio was installed, enabling them to reach a far larger audience via weekly live broadcasts over local radio station KPFA. The venture continued for eight years until the funding ran out.

Partly through Buckner's contrivance, the building became the University of California's Centre for New Music and Audio Technology under the directorship of David Wessel. A planned Mutable release will present Wessel's electronics and Buckner's voice improvising with pianist Alisdair William Matthew, drummer George Marsh and trombonist George Lewis. 1750 Arch issued more than 50 albums before it folded.

Buckner then moved to New York to concentrate on performing. "The back catalogue is not mine," he reveals. "When 1750 Arch Records closed, I gave each of the projects to the principal person in that project. Some went to other labels." So German label Wergo acquired landmark recordings of Conlon Nanarrow's *Studies For Player Piano*, and CRI issued *New Music For Electronic And Recorded Media*, a showcase for women composers with Pauline Oliveros as consultant. Those important releases were produced by Charles Amirkhanyan, who also curated *10 + 2*, an anthology of American sound poetry and experimental texts which Buckner now hopes to rerelease as a Mutable CD. He has already retrieved *Ethnic Fusion*, a beguiling set by hand drummer Big Black and guitarist Anthony Wheaton, and two albums by Space, Buckner's trio with saxophonists Roscoe Mitchell and Gerald Osheta. Randy Wiisten's solo piano album, *Blue*, is about to be coupled with a new solo set, *Ancient Future*, and released as a double CD.

Buckner is perhaps best known for his performances in Robert Ashley's operas. Their association dates from 1963 when the 1750 Arch Ensemble, a 23 piece group, commissioned a piece from Ashley. Since then Buckner has been a regular collaborator, improvising in accordance with the composer's guidelines, realising "the musicalisation of the melody inherent in the declaration of the text".

Another notable collaboration has been with former Art Ensemble Of Chicago multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell, in his New Chamber Ensemble and various improvising contexts. "Roscoe came to the Bay Area with Lester Bowie and Malachi Favors in the mid-60s," Buckner remembers. "First time I heard them they'd moved in across the street from David Wessel. I heard interesting music coming out of this house. When I went to bed, music was still coming out of the house. Next morning music was still coming out of the house. We went over and found their instruments set up and

in front were sleeping bags on the floor – a big revelation to me as to what is involved in becoming a good improviser." Later, when Buckner, Mitchell and Osheta formed Space, they sought out the seclusion of "a tiny village in Italy and played all day, every day for a month".

The Mutable catalogue contains such gems as *8 O'Clock: Two Improvisations*, documenting a December 2000 encounter between Buckner and Mitchell; and *Jump The Circle, Jump The Line*, showing the singer at work with electronics specialist Tom Hamilton. "As a solo performer I made a decision not to control electronics myself," Buckner says. "I wanted the challenge to come up with timbres that were naturally made, relating to the acoustics of the voice." In the duo Hamilton uses a processing system that treats Buckner's baritone in unpredictable ways. "You get rid of that one to one relationship."

Buckner has continued his energetic, deeply committed promotion of contemporary music, overseeing, since 1989, the World Music Institute's Interpretations concert series. Some of which was recorded on *Sign Of The Times* (Lowly Music), his second solo album. He is keen to preserve his identity as a performing artist, presenting *Quinde*, his collaborative composition with Annes Lockwood, and a piece by Cuban composer Tania León at San Francisco's Other Minds Festival this month. Projects with bassist Jon Deak, poet Chris Mann, composer David First, percussionist "Fast Forward" and an opera by Stephen Dickman, based on the Mesopotamian *Epic Of Gilgamesh*, are all scheduled. "I'm trying to be strict with myself," he declares. "When I stopped running the concert series in California and the record label and started concentrating on my own music, the pleasure I got from it, and the quality, went way up. Now I'm trying to do those things without that changing." □ *Jump The Circle, Jump The Line* is out now on Mutable Music

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Global Ear: Riga

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: on the edge of the Baltic, Latvia's capital is a hidden labyrinth of post-Industrial science. By Viestarts Gailitis



Latvian showboys (left to right): Radio Kaput, Martina Gonzalez (in white shirt), Kaput

In the damp cellar of Riga's Metro club, noise duo Radio Kaput's chaotic, interrupted radio transmissions, crackles, hum, blue lights and twinkling radio transistor bulbs call to mind a mysteriously abandoned submarine or a surreal industrial facility where mad scientists perform their earth-threatening experiments. The Metro, an old, low wooden mansion in the heart of the city's Art Nouveau high-rise centre, is where the capital's underground comes up for air. As their name suggests, Radio Kaput perform a kind of a post-apocalyptic broadcast. Its shaven-headed, white-clad young operatives improvise with sounds sourced from a set of antique shortwave radios hooked together in a remarkable installation. Oddly enough, people are actually dancing.

Unusual instruments, performance spaces, technological custody and an urge to transcend society's mental bondage (a trait inherited from Soviet times) have long been part of Riga's progressive music scene. This liberal approach is rooted in the scene's amateurism and art circle origins, rather than in the conservatory. Riga's noise and Industrial set, to which Radio Kaput loosely belong, is the wildest in terms of seeking out unexpected forms of expression.

The city's underground surfaced in the early 80s around The NSRD (whose acronym translates as Laboratory for the Restoration of Non-Existing Feelings), an outfit consisting of the artistic and eccentric avant garde music godfather Harolds Ledins and his colleague Jans Bokso. Their first recording, 1984's *Kuncendorfs Un Osensovskis* (Huntendorf And Osenovsky's), is an absurd, poetic descent into the realm of dreams, with weird voices murmuring over analogue melodies, distortion, effects and tambura. NSRD's activities also involved performance. For six years running (1982-87) they filmed and recorded a march with sax and trumpets along the railway line to Riga's seaside suburb Bolderaga. The channelling Ledins still makes both Ambient and experimental soundtracks.

The industrial wasteland left behind by the Soviets now serves as a home for stray cats. It also provides artists an inspirational terrain for experimentation. Besides its desolate vistas, musicians venture there for its acoustic properties. One such 'studio' in a northern suburb is inside an old factory plant with a huge round tank that looks like a giant tin can. It makes a great laboratory of echoes, where sounds

enjoy an extended life reverberating in the tank. 20 year old keyboard virtuoso Martinez Gonzalez explores the tank's special acoustics with guitar and an instrument called the 'waterglass', while the other two members of his Turbulences project, Valdemars and Helena, contribute tablas, percussion, guitar and vocals. "You could call this electronic music, but it is recorded mainly in real time, by using acoustic instruments and the acoustics of the space. We just retained electronic aesthetics," explains Valdemars. The tracks are mixed down in a small, rundown office in an ancient horse-post building. It is the headquarters for the alternative Internet radio station RigaSound.org, and the nerve centre for some of Riga's most adventurous musical projects.

Gonzalez is renowned locally for his golden touch. He applies an uncompromising attitude to all his projects, whether it's playing keyboards in post-rock group Sirke, or combining soft, sensual rhythms and psychedelic elements on his antique Rhodes in the soul/funk inspired Kuba.

With the advent of powerful computers in 1997, the Latvian electronic music scene exploded. Although still largely unknown to the outside world, it's already amassed a young and devoted digital army, many of them New Media people involved in building radio stations, Net art projects, Web design and DJ and VJ collectives (Quadrat Musique, Bio-codes, Koka-music and 808, to name a few). Bio-codes member Brain is also the creator of intricate, organic Web designs and thumping Techno tracks. His devotion is characteristic of many of the artists in this milieu. "I think what I do is sometimes more important, than myself," he asserts. One thing they're not in it for is the fame. Local Techno star Aleksandrov has consciously avoided public attention for years.

Koka Music, a "non-commercial post-digital music label", includes members of the legendary 50s group Naphtalm Sound System, an innovative unit that merged acoustic and electronic music to create a rare blend of alternative rock, electronica, Easy Listening and 80s style new wave. Formed by Kiri Vesnik and Judgen Piton, they're one of the most interesting outfits in Baltic electronica. Koka are currently producing what they call "microwave or microscope" sound. Judgen is also one of the composers involved in the electronica and poetry project Orbita. An ironic homage to the new Riga, Orbita's last CD took a laconic and detached yet sensual word and sound journey through the trivia of post-Soviet life.

Participating poet Sergey Trnoffevy describes their work as "a form of poetry where ways of performance are essential". Riga's age-old multiracial flavour achieves its most beautiful expression in the realm of music and poetry. Suggestive Slavic emotionalism shadows Latvia's characteristic withdrawn lyncism, each influencing the other while never quite merging.

The Industrial/noise scene is the most popular local musical undercurrent. One of Riga's noise pioneers goes by the name of Error, a conceptual sound artist whose latest project involves sampling a radio evangelist whose heavily distorted, morose voice pedagogically states the 'merits' of terrestrial life. "Today I got poisoned by butter," he says, "that was God's will" ('Butter' is modern Latvian slang for 'absurdity'). "Pessimism. Oblivion. We all live and die in pain." The absurdity of such public discourse is an endless source of Error's inspiration.

The noise scene reveals how young Latvian minds are caught in a no-man's land between the mental debris of the Soviet era and the new social order. Trapped in the void between the two systems, they trust neither, projecting their disillusionment by depicting a society run by a power – machine, chaos or cash – beyond the control of individual human beings. For some, the collapse of the previous totalitarian ideology created a void that has been filled by a suspicious, nihilist mindset.

Thankfully, nihilism hasn't gripped the entire Industrial milieu. For Lauris, a devout Catholic from Dark Ambient to Claustrophobia, "Darkwave speaks for the unknown within us." With its processed electromagnetic waves sucked in from outer space, their last project, *Lampe O'Ambrance*, suggests they're also searching for the unknown outside us. Its predecessor, *Isolato*, is both an audio soundtrack and an interactive project, mixed in collaboration with the audio-visual outfit Semema, where listeners can program the sounds themselves. Every sound created brings up a corresponding image. This is Claustrophobia's own version of machine-generated music – what Lauris calls a product from the "generation of Lego musicians that put together blocks of sounds". Listeners interacting with artists? Whatever became of Industrial culture's usual fatalism? Like the rest of the Latvian underground, Industrial is a zone where even the most entrenched certainties are open to dispute. □

Websites: www.bio-codes.net, www.kokamusic.lv, www.r-lab.net, rigasound.org. Viestarts Gailitis is a correspondent for Diens, a Latvian newspaper

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Steinski

Tested by Hua Hsu. Photos by Kareem Black

In 1983, Steve Stein was a thirtysomething advertising executive with a serious love of HipHop, the new sound of his native New York streets. He and friend Douglas DiFranco (aka Double Dee) came across an ad for a remix contest presented by the up-and-coming Tommy Boy label, and a weekend later the two had become local legends getting props from Afrika Bambaataa for their frenetic winner, known today as "Lesson 1: The Payoff Mix". Their subsequent work – "Lesson 2: The James Brown Mix", "Lesson 3: The History Of Hip-Hop", and Steinski & Mass Media's "The Motorcade Sped On" – has become HipHop legend, laying out the blueprint for the cut 'n' paste narrative styles championed today by artists like Coldcut, DJ Shadow and Kid Koala.

Born and raised in suburban Mount Vernon, Stein attended the tiny, now defunct Franconia University in New Hampshire, which not only got him out of Vietnam, but also gave him access to some of the freakiest jazz and rock of the day (as well as a pretty good story about the whole student body and faculty showing up to a soccer game on acid). After bumming around for the larger part of the 1970s, he settled down in an advertising job in the early 80s that finally gave him enough spending money to buy copious amounts of records.

While it's been nearly 20 years since Double Dee & Steinski released their three seminal "Lessons", Stein is painfully modest about his accomplishments. After spending much of the 1990s building his one-man advertising company, Steinski is back with a clutch of exciting new projects, including a jawdropping mix sequence for Ninja Tune's *Solid Steel* radio show, collaborative work with Amon Tobin, and an album of 'duets' with Coldcut, Afrika Bambaataa, Z-Trip and DJ Food. There have even been 'exploratory conversations' regarding a new 'rock' version of "Lesson". The Jukebox took place in the recording studio at Stein's office in midtown New York.

JOHN & ERNEST "SUPER FLY MEETS SHAFT" (FROM HARRY WOODS' 2011 1072)

[Listeners to entire song] Yeah that was great, [Island A&R man] Joel Weber played it for me once. [Imitates record] "Super Fly and President behind closed doors – holding hands and making plans." That's a nice piece of work. That's a total rip from [William] Buchanan And [Dickie] Goodman [record producers active from the 50s whose spoof recordings utilised collage 'break-in' and splicing techniques]

Actually, it is Dickie Goodman. Though the record's credited to 'John & Ernest', it's actually a Goodman production. No Buchanan, though – the 'Ernest' was credited as one Sal Passantino.

Those two guys started that period [of cut 'n' paste records], unless somebody came along and says, 'Oh look, [something else] was around in 1950'. I heard the very first one – "The Flying Saucer" – on a jukebox in a Chinese restaurant in Mt Vernon when I was about five or six. I remember thinking, "Wow, this stuff is so exciting! Wham bam bam bam bam!" [Imitates record] "This is your on the spot reporter coming to you from downtown, but wait, there's a flying saucer landing, 't, and they have Smiley Lewis's 'I Hear You Knocking' and all kinds of shit in there. In the 1950s, that was a thing – people worried about flying saucers and shit. We've sampled it a couple of times. 'The flying saucers are real' [Douglas [DiFranco, aka Double Dee] and I took a couple of things out of those. I have a whole bunch of bootleg records of Buchanan And Goodman tape stuff.

MILES DAVIS "IN A SILENT WAY (REHEARSAL)" FROM THE COMPLETE IN A SILENT WAY SESSIONS (COLUMBIA LEGACY 1988)

[Waits until Davis's horn comes in] I heard this period of Miles for the first time when I was in college in 1971. It made a tremendous impression. Up until that point, jazz was either Wes Montgomery – and I felt I was being extremely damn listening to Wes Montgomery – or jazz was like [beatboxes a bebop pattern] bebop type shit, or squarer than that. [Hearing this] was like, 'Oh, this is jazz? This is cool!' It opened up all the limbs all of a sudden. Part of the genius of this record is too Macero's production. Were you aware of the tape splicing when you were getting into this stuff?

I didn't know about too Macero and his idea of, 'You guys just record and we'll make it on a 24 track [sic] afterwards.' Oh, I see, that's the point behind this selection. I didn't know about that stuff until I got into advertising [in the late 70s]. Aside from buying drugs occasionally, the only thing I wanted to do was buy records and books, and I would read about these things. That's when I started hearing, 'Right, Miles would go into the studio and too would just go in and put these long dissolves on stuff, and OK, we got a 45 minute record!' It was fascinating.

It can be argued that you and DiFranco, had a similar approach in the studio, manipulating tape and splicing various sources. Was the stuff Macero doing influential at all?

In terms of cut 'em up stuff, Buchanan And Goodman were a much stronger influence. It was a lot like the radio when I grew up. I loved it. This stuff [points to Davis CD] didn't really impinge on me. Can you describe how different the radio was back then?

The critical radio stations when I was growing up were WMCA – where the disc jockeys as a group were described as 'The Good Guys' – there was WABC and WINS, where Murray The K was. It was classic Top 40

radio, the DJs would have 15 cartridges cued up with advertisements, sound effects, songs, trackwicks, whatever they had sounds of. They'd be pumping away at this stuff like the mighty Wurlitzer, just banging-bang, it was very exciting radio, and the pace and feel and excitement and the not knowing what was going on but knowing it was gonna be exciting, that was a big part of my listening to the radio. I guess another part of it was that at that point the Top 40 wasn't so much in the death grip of record companies as it is now: at the same time as The Beatles, there was Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole and Louis Armstrong, you had all kinds of different shit breaking on the radio. There was no particular relation between those things, as opposed to the current situation where "This is what the corporations want to push". I got used to a wide variation presented in this harem-scram method.

So what do you think of the argument that places, say, The Invisible Scratch Pkiz and DJ Shadow as descendants of avant garde figures like Macero or Stockhausen?

Working pretty hard, aren't they? Drawing the line as tough. It seems to me like it's the same urge that's coming up in people, it's just the time and facilities available when that urge shows up. Stockhausen and them cats have the urge, and this is what comes out of it then. Then the next group of people to get the urge could be Buchanan And Goodman, but it's a completely different setting, so they do it that way. Then the urge comes up with The Scratch Pkiz and them cats, and it happens that way. You're tracing the urge more than you're tracing 'The Scratch Pkiz, knowing about Stockhausen'. I mean, yes, [Macero] is in many ways a pioneer, but for me it was Buchanan And Goodman, they were doing it long before him. Nothing against too, his shit is fabulous.

TRANS LUX "BIG APPLE NOISE" (FROM MASTER MIX 12" 1983)

I think I played one of these, is this one of Began Ceko's records? Sure, I remember this. He was turning these out of his garage in Brooklyn. Ceko was a kind of early bootleg/megamix tycoon who did his own versions of big disc records or made collages of the year's big breaks. Were these records influential for you and Douglas?

Some. Not as much with me as with other people, maybe The Latin Rascals and people like that. I generally find this stuff not quite as funky as I would have liked. A lot of the stuff coming out at the time, I listened to it and thought it was pretty mechanical. I listened to a lot of this stuff because I was buying everything that was coming out, but I never thought I'd want to make a record like that.

Douglas's albums were such that he didn't need a basic electronic track to go up against. He could just make the records flow into each other seamlessly, and it was like, 'OK, if we don't need that extra superstructure, then why have it?' He could make the records sound good, so the sequencers weren't strong records going into weak records or very loud and then not very loud. Douglas is a genius in the studio, and that's why a lot of our records sounded the way they did and not like things like this.

There were a lot of electro mixes coming out in the early 1980s, but you seem to draw a line between what they were doing and what you and DiFranco were doing. How would you characterise that difference?

A lot of this stuff uses a more electronic beat. You can hear the filters working on this stuff and you can hear the synths. With our stuff, we would take instrumental

Invisible Jukebox

tracks that didn't sound very much like this [Roland BOB drum machines phasing away in the background], it was just our taste. We would loop the two bars of the drummer going such and such and put two or three things on top of that, as opposed to this. Also our records were more conceived of like a five minute spirit: they had a beginning, a middle and an end. They went up and down. Records like these were more concerned to be mix elements. You can move into it from another record, move out, they're more regular and the overall feel is the same. Our stuff tended to be a little crazier, more left turns, more [sneezes out a Looney Tunes cuckoo sound].

JUNIOR "MAMA USED TO SAY" (FROM MERCURY 75 1981)

I love this record, man. It's such a lovely, big sounding party record, even though his voice has a slightly operatic, over the top quality. [Emulates Junior hitting the climactic high note] Goddamn, he's got that note and he's gonna hold onto it! The 12" of this had a great cover, with the Martinis glass. I loved that! This was one of the fun moments of "Lesson 2", catching Junior mid-thriller before cutting to the B-Sides. Did you and Douglas map out the songs beforehand?

No. Just boxes of records. Shit man, I can't plan my life, much less plan a record.

Really? Did you have a lot of experience with mixes?
No. We were just farting around, we would occasionally rent a piece of equipment and fuck around. We were ready to do something with a beginning and finish, so it was great that the contest came along. A friend of ours was working at a producer for CBS Records. He came in one day with a copy of Billboard and he said, "Here's this contest, you guys should enter it." It was Tommy Boy's "Hey Mr OJ" contest. It was a contest to make a five minute megamix using anything you wanted and remix this record, it was basically for home DJs. So we said, "OK, let's do it this weekend, that'll be fun." We went to the Roy [the NYC rollerskating rink that hosted a pioneering HipHop weekly] Friday night. On Saturday Douglas came over to my house and we loaded in a whole bunch of records and went up to his studio. We knuckled down and worked till real late. The next morning we came back in and finished it. It was one turntable and an eight track tape deck. I can't mix. Neither can Douglas. We couldn't step to the most amateur San Francisco kid.

How was the record distributed?
At first it was just a test-to-see tape that was sent out to a dozen radio stations, and that's when it really started to get hot. In Philadelphia, kids were taping the mix when it came on - you'd hear the end of the OJ's rap going into the mix going into the commercial - and selling them on the street for 20 bucks. I knew a guy in England who told me, "Oh yeah, we paid 50 quid for one of those cassettes and we were playing it in our club."

AFRIKA BAMBAATAA/AFRIKA ISLAM/ JAZZY JAY (ATTRIBUTED) "FUSION BEATS VOLUME 2" (FROM BOZO MEXO 127 S&W 825)

Back in the days of the manual, mechanical pause buttons. This is the Bambaataa thing on Bozo Meko, "Fusion Beats". It was a pause button edit, it was astonishing!

Can you explain the pause button edit?
That's it! All you have is one cassette machine and one turntable. A mechanical pause button is one that holds the tension on the tape and pauses the motor and everything so that it's basically ready to break. It's

holding its breath. If you put it in a record and disengage the pause at exactly the moment the beat comes through, you can do loops and transitions. This is pretty primitive shit. You have to be dead-on at the right time. God bless people who did records like that. From what I understand, The Latin Rascals started out like that.

I was at a conference where Afrika Islam was talking about this. I think they just recorded it to cassette. It's a megamix of James Brown, [The Mohawks] "Champ" - this is the first time I heard O'Jays & The Blasters. That's how I got all these original 45s - after hearing "Fusion Beats". That's why I got so excited when I heard that Sonny Hopson record [Original 1989 Philadelphia AM Radio Broadcast, a recently reissued collection on Philly Archives of live radio broadcasts of the famed DJ who would 'trap' over songs and commercials] - I was like, "What? The break [from Dyle's "Let A Woman Be A Woman"] is longer! It was another one of those decisions you make as a record collector that you've got to have this stuff, because you need to have as much of it as possible to represent what was around.

The way you and Douglas did your mixes was pretty laborious, but did you ever try pause-tapes?
I wasn't O'Jing then. When I did pause mixes, it wasn't like looping breaks. It was more like Buchanan and Goodman - fast-cutting one thing over another. I hadn't yet gotten into that vibe of, "Yeah, right man, that loop is great, let's just make that go longer." It took me a while to get up the courage to buy two turntables and a mixer so I could go to the Roy and listen to this shit and come home and try to do something about it while I still had the fever.

MASTER JAY & MICHAEL DEE "TSCB" (FROM TSCB 127 1980)

Oh yeah, that's a hard record! Syndrums... I like that! [imitates some guy farting around in the studio discovering synth sounds] Whooped! Hey, electric drums! That's the kind of thing that makes me wish I'd dug a little deeper back in the day.

What was it like back then? You just mentioned going to clubs like the Roy...
The sound system was fabulous. In the very beginning, the DJ was down on the floor so you could just stand there and O.D. would be mixing six inches away from you! As the crowds were larger, they had Bam [Bambaataa] and [Jazzy] Jay up on a raised platform. It wasn't till later that they started using the rollerskating floor. They operated as a Friday-only rap club around 1982.

It was a real democratic atmosphere. There were the ubiquitous Japanese and French film crews, lots of kids who were working at MTV and places like that, lots of people from uptown, downtown hipster types. It was a really nice mix. Everybody always got in. There was no this of picking people out of the crowd. It was, "OK, everybody line up over here and we're gonna let everybody in ten at a time." After the contest, we were royalty. It was fucking unbelievable the places we went. Jellybean's booth at the Funhouse. We were hanging in the front of the clown face with Jellybean, some serious shit here. It was a blast.

Do you remember meeting Bambaataa for the first time?

Oh yeah, of course - who wouldn't? After we had won the contest, Monica [Lynch, former Tommy Boy exec and one third of the staff back then] took us to the Roy - breezed right through the line. We were standing by the booth and Bam was just up there playing, he leans in and waves. She points at us and says, "These are the guys who did that mix!" His

eyebrows went up and he leans down with his big hands and says, "Nice to meet you guys, good work!" Of course at that point, we were still meeting everybody for the first time and I think everyone was still getting a kick out of it, like, "Oh, they're old and they're white!"

When you got your break with Tommy Boy, the Isbel, and HipHop as a whole, were still pretty diverse. There was disaffected party rap like this track, and then straight electro like Bambaataa's "Planet Rock" or the Jonzun Crew. Were you interested in both, and were people generally split between rap and more electronic influenced music?
There weren't enough people into this shit to have a division. Everyone was into everything. Working with a drum machine was easier. At the time, samples and things that could kick an existing loop over and over weren't as prevalent, but you could always find an 808, that's why so many of these records had that "portentous electro sound," everyone was using the same equipment. I tended to like the funkier stuff. But there weren't enough people into this shit to have a division. I mean, the Roy was a huge auditorium, but a lot of times they were only using a third of the floor. Everyone was into everything.

JOHN F KENNEDY SPEECH EXCERPT (FROM A MEMORIAL SERVICE DEDICATED TO THE 34TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES [MODERN SOUND] 1963)

I own all these records about Kennedy. I own about 2000 spoken word recordings, I have pretty much every Kennedy thing extant. Though it's one of our least known tracks in HipHop circles, 1966's "The Motorcade Sped On", which cut up samples of the Kennedy assassination, seems to be one of the first attempts to tell a specific story by way of sampling. How did you come to make that after doing such playful stuff with the earlier Tommy Boy "Lessons" records?

I was always listening to vaguely arty shit, like Laurie Anderson. Douglas and I had done our first three mixes when he finally decided to go back to work and move out of our apartment. He also didn't want to spend as much time making music anymore. The first record took a weekend, the second record took a month and the third record took like six months. So I was just walking around, thinking about a new record, and I knew I wanted to do something emotional. I wanted to learn how to make records to other people. I booked some studio time and I told the engineer I had the beat from "Honky Tonk Woman" and I wanted to make a record about Kennedy. The New Musical Express put "Motorcade" on a flex with Sonic Youth and Sly & Robbie. It was enormous in the UK. The American taste moves to the next big thing very quickly. Over in England, they kind of take their time, and things become big there that aren't big here. They were more excited by the ideas.

I wanted to make the most emotional record I could. I wanted it to be loving. I was thinking strictly in terms of sampling spoken word and I wanted to do-dad it up with as much emotional stuff as I possibly could. There were sirens on record, I had a crying baby in there at one point, and this guy I was hanging out with told me it was too fucking scary. I just wanted to make a spooky, emotional record and I really enjoyed that. At the time, there were a lot more people listening to HipHop than there were aware of the Kennedy assassination. There were people whose time that was. I could make a 9/11 record, but unfortunately my take on 9/11 is so not what the mainstream is, I don't want to get lynched, but that would be a similar event. You can hear in those people's voices [on the record] that

their world ended. It was unbelievable. It was me wanting to make a record with a lot of depth – I'm still really happy I did it.

It seems like so much of today's sample-based instrumental HipHop – especially people who claim to be inspired by you – lacks the desire to be narrative-driven like this.

There's a built-in narrative to "Motorcade", yeah. It's not like I went to a stereo record and made a narrative out of it like Kid Koala does. With Shadow or Enc [Koala], there are rises and falls and tension and release, there's a real sensitivity to the material. There's motion to the songs and how they go along, it's not "Oh, we got a hot beat and we can plunk a lot of shit onto it and yahoo."

CUT CHEMIST "LESSON 4 (THE RADIO)"

FROM UNWIPED REVELATION 12 (DNR) 1995

Wow, you keep on playing me all this old shit!

This isn't that old, but it's someone you've definitely had an impact on. You performed with him.

Scratching's real tasty. Much more contemporary-sounding scratching. Ah, it's either Shadow or Chemist. Chemist? Oh this is "Lesson 4". Wow. He

fucking hits me right in the centre every time. He doesn't overdo it, he's always right on with the funk, and the scratching is amazing. He has a real sense of what he's playing you, in terms of the content.

You know a lot of the newer guys?

My awareness of much of the stuff that I now know about happened slowly, long after the fact of it actually happening. I'm not terribly proud of being as out of touch with things as I was! Meeting some of these guys is really inspiring. After I left them I came here and started working on my mix for *Solid Steel*.

Eventually it became more and more involved because I realised, damn, I want this to be really good.

Your *Solid Steel* mix has got a lot of contemporary rap that people may not be expecting. What do you look for when you go shopping nowadays? How did you end up using something like blockbuster St Louis rapper Nelly's "Country Grammar"?

Well, quality of the track obviously, if it's exciting and funky, which is why I suffer so strongly with most of the really commercial rap and a lot of the really intellectual rap at the same time. The track doesn't seem to be as important. On the intellectual side, it's like, "Hey, let's put in a couple of 5/4 pieces to show people we're really hip!" And then the other guys are

like, "Well, We-Teng is doing a lot of Gothic sounding shit, why don't we do some Gothic sounding shit too!" When I shop, I go to this place and just grab 100 records and just throw them on the turntable. If the track gets my mind, yeah, that's the first thing, "Mo Money, Mo Problems" by Biggie? That track just grabbed me immediately, and I can only think of two other recent songs that made me say, "That's fucking great": Q-Tip's first single "Vivrant Thing", and "Hot Spot" by Foxy Brown. [Flips through the crate of records on the ground. Laughs and pulls out the Nelly single] What a good record "Country Grammar" is! I'll play you the mix I did on it. [Cues a remix of "Country Grammar", complete with chanting monks creeping out the left channel]

This is pretty unusual, reworking such a high profile rap tune.

At the time [of the Tommy Boy contest], we were very old for the demographic. I was already 30. Douglas was 27, we were white. We were already unusual then. Think about how I feel now! I'll be 50 years old and I'm still doing this, excited about being a HipHop producer. I mean, I joined the American Association of Retired People last year! [Additional interview material by Dave Tompkins]



RIDING A WAVE OF NORWEGIAN NEW MUSIC, THE SOFA LABEL COLLECTIVE - INGAR ZACH, IVAR GRYDELAND AND KARL SEGLEM - ARE BREATHING SENSUOUS NEW LIFE INTO FREE IMPROVISATION FROM THEIR OSLO SEAT

WORDS: BEN WATSON

CHAIRMEN'S COLLECTIVE

READY TO SYRINGE YOUR EARS: KARL SEGLEM WITH RAM'S HORN (BELOW); GUITARIST IVAR GRYDELAND AND DRUMMER INGAR ZACH (OPPOSITE)



The burgeoning New Music scene in Norway has made Oslo's B&B Club a busy venue, not just for all varieties of outsource electronica, but also for improvisers who wish to drill right down to the form's compacted historical residues and tap its fierce bitumen lakes. When drummer Ingar Zach released an album with Derek Bailey in 2001 (*Libre*, Sofa/NORCO), it was a classic move for someone new on the scene. Meanwhile, his guitar-playing associate Ivar Grydeland recorded *Triangular Screen* with bassist Tonny Kløften and drummer Tony Oxley. Back in the early 1960s, working with Gavin Bryans in the now legendary Joseph Holbrooke Trio, Bailey and Oxley discovered a suspended sense of time which made British free improvisation distinct from both free jazz and post-Cagean sound experiment. Ordinarily, relative unknowns like Zach and Grydeland teaming up with the distinguished likes of Bailey and Oxley suggests a pair of chancers grabbing attention by their elders' coattails. But *Triangular Screen* indicated Grydeland already had a deeper understanding of Bailey's music than the rockists who equate Bailey's louder side with the proto-punk excesses of *? & The Mysterians*. And on Zach and Grydeland's duo record *Visiting Ants*, the Norwegians demonstrated they didn't need the help of the founders to play this music. Their CD title also showed they were familiar enough with its legacy to mock the bookbats hurled by free improvisation's detractors. Like so many insults in art wars, the term

'insect music' now sounds like a badge of honour.

In an action-packed week last January, Zach and Grydeland visited London. They played at several of the city's improvising hotspots: the Klinker Club (twice), the Red Rose and the record shop and art gallery Sound 323. At the latter they were spellbinding, creating an electric contradiction between trance and humour as they wrestled with their novel sonorities. At the Klinker, joined by bassist Kløften, the pair did battle with Pat Thomas's stabbing electronic keyboards and Hugh Metcalfe's notorious one man band, enthusiastically embracing both funk and junk. These Norwegians may be improv fundamentalists, but they're not precious, as anyone who's heard *No Spaghetti* (Edron's *Luton...* and tell me what it was, a notorious international 12 piece orchestra which includes Thomas, will concede.

It is uncanny how Zach and Grydeland can return to the fundamentals of what Joseph Holbrooke played in the early 60s, yet still make music of such sparkle and immediacy. Their playing has none of the crabbed sound of musicians who crave someone else's aura. This is surely because the 'aging' of musical styles is not an automatic result of time passing; it's to do with how it has been taken up, used and abused. Joseph Holbrooke influenced free improvisation has previously been a closed book in Norway – only composer Arne Nordheim has approached its suspension of time and timbral detail – and the pair use it as a method of creating sonic events rather than a 'style' to be

pastiched. Improvisation sounds like sensuous activity, not something to be passively admired and reproduced. Though they are dogged in pursuit of musicians who have been through the Bailey/Oxley system (Thomas found out about improvisation through concerts involving Oxley in Oxford in 1979; Hugh Metcalfe was a member of the Oxley Quartet in 1987; Thomas in 1992), Zach and Grydeland are nevertheless expressing their own personalities. Their delight in shimmer and ear syringing twitters is a further indication of youth.

Ten years older than Zach and Grydeland, Karl Seglem has been a professional musician (tenor sax and ram's horns) since 1985. He has played rhapsodic, folk-inflected free jazz with drummer Terje Isungset for nearly as long. Norwegian jazz used to be dominated by Jan Garbarek's glossy, modal/folk fusion. Until recently, the main dissident was alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, who operates from the town of Stavanger. Gjerstad has collaborated regularly with Peter Brötzmann, both in the Borah Bergman Trio and on the 1998 duo *CO Invisible Touch* (Cadenec). He previously preferred international bass/drum teams for his own trio – first Johnny Dyani and John Stevens, then William Parker and Hamid Drake. Now, though, Gjerstad is using Norwegian players – another sign of the times. Sofa have recently issued a haunting solo album, *Sticks & Stones*, by Gjerstad's drummer, the



prolific Pål Nilsson-Love.

Karl Seglem has been running Sofa's parent label NORCD for 11 years, with 40 releases in its catalogue. What is the relationship between the two labels? "When Ingar and Ivar came and said they wanted to start a record company," he explains, "I said, 'Don't do it – join me instead'. I needed to work with someone, I had run it alone for ten years. We reorganised the company, we share it, it's a co-operative now."

They called the label Sofa because sound engineer Thomas Huikelberg sat on Zach's livingroom sofa to record its first album. The sound of Sofa's releases is exceptionally clean and punchy, indicating a new generation of improvisers with digitally trained ears (in this, it bears comparison to Confront Recordings, the label founded by British cellist Mark Wastell, who also runs the Sound 323 space). Zach and Grydeland only met a couple of years ago, but they find they agree about everything musical. They learned about improvisation through British releases and from the Swedish scene around Mats Gustafsson. Seglem tells me he released the debut record by a trio called Veslefrakk; on NORCD in 1994, before electronics/noise musician Helge Sten from the rock group Motorpsycho joined them and they became Supersilent. That outfit have been the flagship riding Norway's new musical wave abroad, and the Sofa/NORCD collective agree they are special, though

as Zach points out, "They are different from us. They're improvised, but they have these long noise structures, very horizontal thinking. They are a very good band, they do different stuff all the time."

Ingar Zach never heard Derek Bailey live until he visited him at home in East London's Hackney, played some duets in his sitting room, and invited him to play at Bâ in October 2000. This duet became that attention-grabbing Sofa release *User mentioned earlier*. Ivar Grydeland similarly gravitated towards the source of his listening enthusiasms. He originally took up guitar simply because he found one at home – and his mother used to play one with the Salvation Army. Attending Trondheim Academy, he grew increasingly frustrated with his guitar tutors until he got Tony Oxley designated as a teacher – quite a coup considering Oxley plays drums, not guitar.

"It's not important for me to play 'notes'," Grydeland explains. "It's the sound, I see the amplifier and speaker as part of the instrument, not just the guitar. I don't play guitar and electronics, the whole thing is one instrument."

Grydeland is a less antagonistic and argumentative player than Bailey, and his contributions tend to fuse with Zach's metalzoic soundworld (though of course, that is what happens when Bailey plays with a percussionist as rhythmically compatible as Oxley). Grydeland talks about finding a "language" on his

instrument, employing one of Oxley's key expressions. "We are both still changing the set-ups for our instruments," he says. "I'm still trying to find new things on the guitar. We are still trying to find our own language. You don't see Tony Oxley playing a single drum on its own any more because he's found his language. Of course he is developing that language, but he's found his instrument – I haven't done that yet, I'm still trying."

Following Bailey's habit, Zach is unhappy with any of the various labels that have been stuck to free improvisation. "One has all these sounds in one's head which one doesn't know how to make yet," he explains. "You need to find ways to make those sounds – it requires a lot of thinking, actually."

Both musicians are pleased that the Norwegian union of composers have just accepted a laptop improviser as a 'composer', even though he cannot read or write notes. By the end of the interview, the pair are finishing each other's sentences, their discourse as indivisible as their best music: "I listen to new contemporary composed music, but not to make structures and compositions for improvisers... We're less interested in that... We're interested in... the sound, not how it was made, it's not that important whether it was composed or not."

Who said what? What does it matter – unless one has copyrighted the phrase? Maybe the Sofa collective don't care about that either. ☐ Website: sofa.norcd.no

AFTER A CAREER SPANNING SIX DECADES, INCLUDING ENCOUNTERS WITH MILES DAVIS, CECIL TAYLOR, ANTHONY BRAXTON, CHARLIE PARKER, BLUE NOTE RECORDS, AND ROBERT DE NIRO'S MOTHER, FREE JAZZ SAXOPHONIST AND LOFT SCENE PIONEER SAM RIVERS HAS DISCOVERED THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IN FLORIDA

WORDS: ANDY HAMILTON

OPPOSITE: SAM RIVERS IN NEW YORK CITY, LATE '60S

Growin' with THE FLOW

"These questions are hard for me," says saxophone colossus Sam Rivers, pondering the question of how the "ecstatic" sounds of black free jazz have managed to cross over to outsider rock audiences in the past few years. "I feel all the music. I feel classical, I feel the blues, I feel the avant garde, I feel bebop." Rivers has an incredible breadth of experience: "I've played with all these musicians—John Lee Hooker, Joe Cocker, T-Bone Walker, Jimmy Witherspoon, BB King, Billie Holiday, Chaka Khan, Jeanne Lee, Kazuko Shirashi, Cecil Taylor, Jaki Byard, Herbie Hancock, Gil Evans, Chuck Corea, Miles Davis, Orzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, and so on down the line. I've got my list in front of me today... Sorry, it's a really long list! I don't want to stack it up on you."

The list may be long, but the saxophonist shows a quiet dignity, not arrogance, in dwelling upon it. At the age of 78 (some reference books still show him born in 1930 rather than the correct date of 1923), Rivers's individual playing remains amazingly strong. It's astonishing to recall that he's part of the generation of Charlie Parker, though he first came to attention after his move to New York in the 60s. A vital contributor to the city's loft scene through his own Studio Rivbea, Rivers performed there with such stalwarts as Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Dewey Redman and Frank Lowe. He's also worked with European free improvisors like Alex Von Schlippenbach, Albert Mangelsdorff and Evan Parker. His own small groups, notably the 70s trio with Dave Holland and Barry Altschul, or the current one with Doug Matthews and Anthony Cole, have pushed at the boundaries of freedom and abstraction. Yet the saxophonist has never quite received the exposure his originality warrants. Speaking on the phone from his home in Florida, Sam Rivers is lively and eager to talk. He stresses that composition is just as central to his musical vision as improvisation, and he's kept a foot in chord-based jazz as well as free (he was a member of Orzy Gillespie's small group and big band for four years in the 1980s). "Both approaches are

necessary," he elaborates. "I wouldn't want to play free all the time, and I wouldn't want to play changes all the time, now that I've freed myself from playing them. Well, even when I was playing changes, I was also playing free... With the advent of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, I had pretty much worked harmonically up to that point, but the next phase was automatically what Cecil and Ornette were doing."

From early in his career, Sam Rivers has followed his own precepts without regard for prevailing fashion. His grandfather was a musician and music publisher, and his parents were gospel singers; his mother from New Orleans, his father a member of the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers from Tennessee. This background has meant that while pursuing abstraction, Rivers has regularly drawn on the pool of African-American roots music: blues, gospel, work songs and shouts.

He began on piano and violin, but fell in love with the tenor saxophone in high school. This was back in the late 30s, when he came under the spell of swing-era jazz masters Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. "I was fortunate not to zero in on one or two people," he declares, "like most of the young musicians have zeroed in on John Coltrane, and inevitably sound like him. There were many other musicians when I was coming up, like Don Byas, Lucky Thompson, Jimmy Forrest, Joe Thomas. All these big bands were around at the time, each had two tenor stars in the band. I was fortunate to be able to go and listen to them, living in Chicago. My mother and father didn't think that much of jazz—they were real church people, into spirituals, and European concert music—but they made sure we got to see these bands anyway."

When he left the Navy in 1947, he wound up in Los Angeles, playing there with bluesmen Jimmy Witherspoon and T-Bone Walker, as well as bebop groups. Moving to the East Coast, he enrolled in the Boston Conservatory on the GI Bill, which provided returning service personnel with financial assistance

for higher education.

He studied composition and viola, playing sax in local groups, and backing R&B singers and show ensembles. He stayed in Boston through the 50s, working in larger groups such as Herb Pomeroy's big band, and in small groups led by Joe Gordon and Jaki Byard. Most importantly, he got acquainted with the modern jazz pioneers. "Charlie Parker was a friend of mine," Rivers explains. "He came to Boston when I was a student, and he would stay in our house, I would hear him playing the piano; he would play pretty much like Coleman Hawkins, church chords. Dizzy was far more advanced harmonically than Charlie Parker, more complicated. Charlie Parker was basically playing the blues."

Like John Coltrane's pre-Miles Davis period, Rivers's early career is poorly documented on record. While Coltrane made a few commercially issued recordings, Rivers apparently made none during his stay in Boston. The scene there was fragmentary, and since live jazz at that time was a day-to-day phenomenon, there was no sense of "we have to preserve this." During this period he was honing his completely original approach to improvisation: "I've been philosophically pursuing this process since 1946," Rivers says. "After doing it for so many years, and working at it, it just comes out." But was there a time when he was struggling to learn to improvise? "Yes, but it wasn't from a lack of knowledge of chords, because I was a pianist, and pianists do know their changes." The saxophonist is sceptical about the free improv view that improvisation should be focused on never repeating yourself. "It doesn't bother me too much to repeat a phrase—as long as I remember that I repeat it. If I don't remember it, I've got a problem!"

In an interview quoted on the original sleeve to his Blue Note album, *Dimensions and Extensions*, he described his search for a unique saxophone sound during the 50s: "I listened to everyone I could hear to make sure I didn't sound like them. I wasn't taking any chances; I wanted to be sure I didn't sound like anyone else." He says now, "I always



BELOW: SAM RIVERS NOW
OPPOSITE: SAM AND BEA RIVERS, STUDIO
RIVEA, NEW YORK CITY, 1972

considered that it's part of the tradition of a jazz performer to make an original contribution. So how do you go about doing this? You don't zero in on one person. The more influences you have, the less any one sticks out." Rivers certainly doesn't play phrases that anyone else does. Nor does he outline the chord changes, and though his lines are interesting, he's not particularly melodic either. His effect can be quite reedy – the nasal sound found in double-reed instruments such as the oboe – even on tenor sax. But his tone is a strong one which can cut through his fellow players, though it's more piercing than Coltrane's overwhelming – a neutral compromise between light and huge, and starkly beautiful. There's no Sam Rivers 'school', no disciples; he didn't invent a methodology that could be developed by others, like Coltrane. He's a one-off. I suggest that it must be very difficult for horn players to describe their own tone. "It is," he responds. "No, I can't describe it... I do use a reedman record. The softer the reed, the more 'reedy' the sound... Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, they had boxes and boxes of mouthpieces. I just had one mouthpiece and I wouldn't dare try to change it, because once you change it and you get dissatisfied, nothing's right again."

When Rivers arrived in New York in 1964, already in his early forties, he was a mature but little known stylist. "I came late on the scene," he says. "I came to New York a trained musician, not learning on the job like most musicians of the bebop generation. So did the other musicians of the avant garde, in the late 60s – Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Hamiet Blount, Leroy Jenkins, Mural Richard Abrams – they came to New York full-fledged musicians. People assumed that I was around their age."

Rivers didn't record for a commercial label until his late thirties, and didn't get to lead a group until around ten years after that. "My recording career really started in 1961 with Todd Demerion... But it's a mistake to think that a person's career starts from their arrival in New York." This makes his recorded debut one of the latest of any major jazz figure of his generation.

As with many others, what really lifted Rivers's career was his association with Miles Davis. It came about through Tony Williams, the drummer in Davis's classic 60s quartet. Rivers began working with Williams in 1959, inviting the drummer into his Boston Improvisational Ensemble when he was still only 13. No recordings of that outfit are available, but Rivers has claimed that the ensemble stressed total spontaneity at a time when the New Thing was not yet liberated from grooves and defined structures. Rivers recorded under Williams's precocious leadership on the 1964 Blue Note dates, *Lifetime* (later the name of the drummer's defining electric jazz power trio) and *Spring*. These albums featured the drummer's own remarkable compositions. "Well," Rivers remembers, "he sort of hummed each piece to me and I wrote it down. It came from his head. He was a talented young man."

By this time Williams had joined Miles Davis, and the saxophonist was brought into the group later in 1964 on his protégé's recommendation. "I was touring as music director for T-Bone Walker at the time," Rivers recalls. "Tony Williams had left Boston, and joined Miles Davis. He sent me a telegram saying, 'George Coleman split, Miles wants you to join his group.' So I left T-Bone Walker." He toured Japan with the group, and on the only recorded evidence, *Miles in Tokyo*, (1964, released in Japan only, although extracts appeared on *Heard Round The World*) certainly fitted into Davis's ethos, more so than any tenor player between Coltrane and Wayne Shorter (and there were a few luminaries

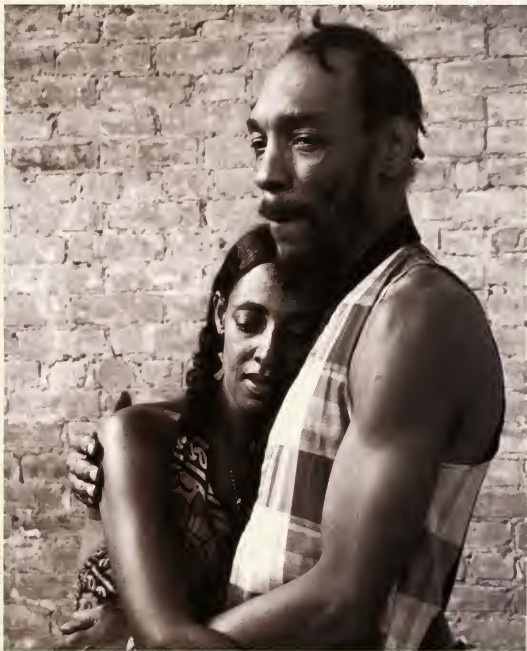
who took that seat – George Coleman, Sonny Stitt and Hank Mobley). But Rivers's distinctive post-bop, incipiently free style proved intractable to Davis, and the association lasted only six months. "What I didn't know was that I was just a fill-in – Miles had already made arrangements for Wayne Shorter to join. So after a while I left and went with Andrew Hill," he explains. Did he want to stay with Davis? "It probably wouldn't have worked because I was ready to go further than the tradition, and Miles was still in the tradition. He did go avant garde later – a lot of the things Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock were doing were very free. Then with Stitches Brew, that was all free music – free in a different way, with the bass and drums being static, holding a rhythm, and everything else above it sort of ethereal, flowing... which was beautiful. It was this idea of playing free but still being totally accessible to the audience – dance music in a sense, dense rhythms but avant garde music... Miles and I stayed good friends all the way. He used to come down to my Studio RiveBea and listen to the musicians, though he never played."

Rivers made his belated recording debut as leader, *Fuchsia Swing Song*, in 1964, having landed a contract with Blue Note. But producer Alfred Lion found the current material too difficult, so *Fuchsia* featured music written five years earlier. "That was very complicated music," Rivers explains. "So instead, we recorded material somewhat on the fringe of the cutting edge. It's music that I'm still proud of, of course, but it was something that was part of my past." To put the music in context, Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was recorded two days before Rivers's date, and Archie Shepp's *Four For Trane* had been recorded two months earlier, while Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch* had just come out. *Fuchsia* may be groove driven, and cool and clear in its approach compared to Coltrane's ecstatic jazz – and less radical than the Rivers Blue Notes that followed. But today it still comes across as completely fresh and compelling, one of the saxophonist's finest achievements. It also features the ballad "Beatrice", written for his wife, the only Rivers composition to become a jazz standard.

The three subsequent Blue Note dates concluded with *Dimensions And Extensions*. Recorded in 1967, *Dimensions* is a wild album. But Alfred Lion left the label before its assigned release date and it only surfaced ten years later, coupled with an Andrew Hill date. Earlier tracks have an affinity with the bitter-sweet dissonance of trumpeter Booker Little's compositions from earlier in the decade. But with the "pulse, no metre" track "Effusive Melange", we're into ferocious free jazz, while "Involution" is a remarkable dialogue between Rivers and James Spaulding, both on flutes. "Affiliatus", with just tenor, bass and drums, prefigures the trio-based free improv that became Rivers's preferred vehicle over the next decade and more. All four of the crucial Blue Note documents were recently issued in a box set by the US archival label Mosac.

In 1969, with his wife Bea, Rivers found a loft above a vacated department store in Manhattan, which was in fact owned by Robert De Niro's mother, Virginia Admiral. "Robert Mapplethorpe was on the fourth floor, and there were a lot of other artists in the building at the time," he reminisces. There, he set up the performance space known as Studio RiveBea. It became the focus of the saxophonist's increasing swerve towards free improv. Rivers was not really a loft-scene pioneer – the scene had been happening since several years before – but he was a pivotal organisational figure. He played at RiveBea with such figures as Clifford Jordan, Dewey Redman, Frank Lowe, Charles Tyler, Julius Hemphill, Oliver







IF YOU THOUGHT TODAY'S POP MUSIC WAS MECHANICAL AND REPETITIVE, WAIT UNTIL YOU ENCOUNTER THE AUTOMATED INHABITANTS OF SAN FRANCISCO'S MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE, ATTENDED BY CURATOR DAN ZELINSKY

WORDS: JASON GROSS

CABINETS OF CURIOSITY: A SELECTION OF 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY COIN-OPS, PLAYER-PIANOS, ORCHESTRIONS AND PROTOTYPE JUKEBOXES KEPT AT THE MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE (OPPOSITE)

MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE

At the Western edge of San Francisco's Sunset district, at the foot of the sprawling Golden Gate Park overlooking the foggy bay and Ocean Beach, stands the historic Cliff House. Venture into the building and descend two levels below the street, where a blizzard cabinet of curiosities awaits. On entering, you encounter Laughing Sal, a six-foot tall paper-mâché woman with long curly red locks, black-stained apron and gap-toothed smile. For half a dollar, she'll rock back and forth laughing at you like a maniac, just like she once did day after day for 50 years, when she used to hold down a pitch at the old Playland amusement park. Continuing inside, you come across dozens more automated figures, fortune tellers, love tellers, strength testers, photo booths and dioramas lining two hallways, a large back room and side alcoves. Behind you, a 1912 model Wurlitzer Style II Orchestra beckons you to drop a coin and release its kinetic energies. Essentially the Orchestra is an extended player-piano fitted with strings, bass and snare drums, a rank of flute pipes and a triangle, 'played' by a nail-covered wooden rail connected to a churning piano roll. The coin triggers the sound of turning gears as the motor whirly into action, ready to regale you with the dulcet melody of 'Love's Fancies'.

Welcome to the world of the Musée Mécanique, described by its proprietor Dan Zelinsky as "an authentic collection of coin-operated automatic mechanical musical instruments". To the casual observer, they might appear to be mere sideshow novelties, but these 'coin-ops' (as they're technically known) represent a little-known chapter in America's musical history. Their presence is a reminder that the instrumental inventors of our own time – 608s, 303s, 909s, Cubase, ProTools and other devices – will one day find themselves on history's scrap pile. One hopes that a late-day equivalent of Zelinsky will emerge to document them.

Coin-ops first appeared in the early 1800s as distant ancestors of today's billion-dollar slot machine industry dispensing candies and smokes to paying customers. Things began to change when various entrepreneurs sought other ways to profit from what were essentially mechanical goods dispensers. In the late 19th century, Cincinnati-based German immigrant Rudolph Wurlitzer (founder of the company whose organs would jerk a million cinema tears, and later still, whose jukeboxes would become inextricably linked with rock 'n' roll mythology) turned his instrument importing and manufacturing business into an early version of "music on demand". By simply attaching coin slots to player-pianos, he precipitated a mad rush to manufacture similar machines around America.

Coin-op companies were self-contained entities, producing every aspect of the machines from

research and development through to casting metal parts and carving the woodwork. Once a prototype was completed, which took about a year, production lines were capable of rolling out 100 models a day. If the demand was there. Crisscrossed with such colourful names as the North Tonawanda, the Nelson Wiggins and the Seeburg KT Special, these huge devices were built to withstand the heavy wear and tear of repeat plays in family entertainment centres across America.

At the same time, the music business was dominated by song publishing organisations (most notably Tin Pan Alley). In the pre-phonographic age, profits were courted by sheet music sales. For publishers, therefore, it made perfect sense to fill ice cream parlours, shopping centres, restaurants, pizza parlours and dancehalls with programmable machines dispensing the hits of the day, thereby spreading a song's popularity. Once a well-tuned tune was pegged, it was easy to draw in customers willing to feed coins into the machines to hear favourite songs like "Sweet Sue", "Sweet Rosie O'Grady", "High School Cadets", "Dizzy Fingers", "Everybody Stomp" and "Don't Give Up The Ship".

Sadly, the march of technology eventually eclipsed these coin-operated contraptions. As early as 1890, Wurlitzer had worked out a way of attaching a coin mechanism to a phonograph, ushering in another new method of delivery: the jukebox. In the 1930s, skyrocketing jukebox sales registered just how far power in the music industry was shifting away from song publishers and towards record manufacturers. Vinyl records – initially created as a means to preserve speeches and reproduce operatic arias – had entered the consumer domain; and once the wireless radio started broadcasting directly into people's homes, it largely took musical entertainment out of the public, social realm into private, domestic space. The days of the coin-op were numbered.

However, their rapidly approaching obsolescence couldn't diminish their appeal for San Francisco native Edward Zelinsky, father of the Musée's current proprietor. Sometime in the 1930s, Zelinsky traded a case of oil he had won at a raffle for a little one-cent penny arcade machine. Immediately smitten, his family and friends piled it with change, and soon he had enough to buy more and more machines. Eventually he had amassed a huge collection. Meanwhile, a local Playland amusement park run by George Whitney had opened an attraction called the "Musée Mécanique" to exhibit the collection of coin-ops it had built up since the park was inaugurated in the 1900s. Together with George Whitney's son, Zelinsky would trade machines back and forth regularly. Now, Zelinsky's son Dan recalls that his family's basement was filled with coin-ops by the time he was born. Growing up around these

wondrous mechanical marvels, he soon became enchanted with the machines and began to share his father's obsession. When the Whitney family closed the park in the early 70s, the Zelinskys leapt at the chance to take over the Musée, which they moved up the street to its present location.

For going on 30 years, there has been no one to greet visitors at the door. Instead, they might encounter a kindly attendant with a belt full of keys and a nametag reading "I work here". On most days, however, Dan can be found dusting and sweeping, fixing any one of the dozens of machines, or answering questions about the assembled contraptions. Indeed, much of Zelinsky's time and energy is spent on repairs, as the years and the elements have taken their toll on the aging mechanisms. Their condition is exacerbated by the salt air, sand and grime that goes with the museum's oceanside location. The weather is the most unpredictable factor, as changes of humidity affect the looseness of the drums, and the tuning of the pipes and pianos.

But the Musée's thousands of appreciative visitors make the seemingly endless maintenance work worthwhile. "People are walking back into their childhood, playing with the same machines they did years ago," Dan Zelinsky observes. Surely hearing these songs over and over every day for so many years must drive him to distraction? Not at all. "There's so much effectiveness in each tune," he enthuses. "Each one tells a story. They bring back great memories for some people or make new memories for others." With so many coin-ops in one room, interesting combinations of melodies periodically erupt. "A lot of people purposely start them all at the same time. They like that cacophony type of hell."

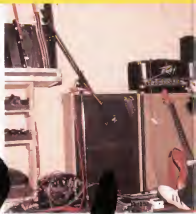
The instruments' age and frailty, not to mention the logistics, put paid to any dreams of touring these enormous gadgets to different locations around the country. Instead Zelinsky fine-tuned the machines into top working order and hired a recording engineer to tape the automata in their natural environment – complete with the initial coin drop, for true audio verité – and produced a souvenir CD, *The Zelinsky Collection*. Released by the Musée in 2000, it generated enough demand for a second volume the following year (reviewed in *Outer Limits*, The Wire 205). The CDs make valuable historic documents, but you have to experience these gadgets' whirling, clanging performances in the flesh, as it were, to get the full effect of the music. "You see here the evolution of mechanical musical machines," Dan Zelinsky concludes. "There's a very few of them on display anywhere anymore. Enough people come in to enjoy it and remember it from their childhood to make it worthwhile to preserve it." □ Musée Mécanique, 1080 Point Lobos Road, San Francisco, CA 94121, USA. Tel 001 415 386 1170. Website: museemecanique.citysearch.com

CHINE MUSIC



THIS MONTH, SONIC YOUTH PRESENT THE ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES FESTIVAL IN LOS ANGELES: A RICH CELEBRATION OF THE UNDERGROUND, OUTSIDER MUSIC NETWORK THEY HAVE CHAMPIONED FOR 21 YEARS. IN OUR 12 PAGE SONIC YOUTH SPECIAL, WE SPEAK TO KIM GORDON, THURSTON MOORE AND LEE RANALDO DURING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR ATP, AND AS THEY PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO A NEW ALBUM AND FILM SOUNDTRACK. ON PAGE 40, WE PRESENT A PRIMER ON ALL 5Y'S ESSENTIAL RECORDINGS, SOLO WORKS AND SIDE PROJECTS

INTERVIEW: CHRISTOPH COX
PHOTOS: STEFANO GIOVANNINI



HELL

In rock as in real life, utopia is always just a dream away. No one has put their ideals on the line with as much conviction as Sonic Youth, whose belief in the redemptive power of rock is put to the test at this month's All Tomorrow's Parties in Los Angeles. When they were handed the curatorship of a high profile event with ATP's clout, they set about putting together a fabulous dream ticket designed after the group's own extremely eclectic tastes. Their formidable line-up takes in free jazz firestarters Cecil Taylor and Fred Anderson; the noise immolations of Merzbow and Pea; the precarious jumpcutting of Boredoms and Jackie O Motherfucker; the numbskull nihilism of original Stooge Ron Ashton; the blasted romanticism of Television; the Riot Grrrl glam of Sleater-Kinney and Peaches; the various monotonies, drones and silences of Tony Conrad, The Dead C and Kevin Drumm; the digital percussion tapeliness of Irua Mon; plus mighty mousers Lydia Lunch and Cannibal Ox; motorik cruisers Stereolab and much more.

The cement binding this prospective Babel of clashing styles and competing noises is, of course, Sonic Youth themselves. Since their inception 21 years ago they have been laying down communications links across generations, genre lines and even gender/racial divides. They declared their hand straight off, on their first two records, with the Stooges evocations of "Brother James" and their "I Wanna Be Your Dog" cover. Through much of the 1980s they kept returning to 1969, the beacon year

of The Stooges, Woodstock, the Manson murders and Altamont, sifting through the debris as if trying to redeem rock's utopian dream from its traumas. The popularity of 1988's *Daydream Nation* scored them a level of creative freedom they've been fully exploiting ever since by paralleling their major releases with their SYR own-label experimental albums, while individually pursuing their different collaborations with a broad range of musicians not unlike those featured in All Tomorrow's Parties.

Sonic Youth's level of freedom is not only founded on an unprecedented open-ended deal with the Geffen record label; it's dependent on the compact they have made with their audience to blast open purportedly difficult musics and share the secret ecstasies of their discoveries with all those who've come with them this far. Sonic Youth would dearly like it to be a two way traffic, but they're aware of the risks inherent in testing the good faith of an expanding rock audience. Their most serious test to date came when, with new member Jim O'Rourke, they toured Goodbye 20th Century, the SYR double set of contemporary composition covers, through Europe last year. A loud dissenting faction in London aside, the mutual trust between Sonic Youth and their followers paid off.

Meanwhile, the two competitive Sonic Youth songs they included in the set – the first album's "She Is Not Alone", and the recent NYC Ghosts & Flowers track "Side2Side" – let on how they've been communicating with the century's dissonant voices all along.

BIBA KOPF

How did Sonic Youth get to curate All Tomorrow's Parties?

(Lee Ranaldo) The guy who puts on these shindigs, Barry Hogan, invited us to participate in one of the ATPs in the UK at Camber Sands, and it was a very special event. The festival started out as an arbitrated event from the very beginning, and that idea appealed to us – that it was a chance for an artist or a group to reflect their sensibilities, and that idea appealed to us – that it was a chance for an artist or a group to reflect their sensibilities. And the scene at Camber Sands was just amazing, kind of like the holiday camp in Torrey or something like that. Everyone stayed on the site in these little bungalows, and it was just a really cool scene. One thing led to another, and the last day we were there, Barry popped the question: "How about you guys curating one?" Through his further brainstorming, he decided he wanted to try it in the US. We were game to do it. It seemed like a good time for us to attempt to do something like this, where we put our sensibilities on the line. That's always been part of our situation. With our opening acts on tours, we try to pick really creative and interesting musicians and artists. And this was a chance to do that same thing on a larger scale. *(Thurston Moore)* It's kind of funny that we were asked to curate this festival, because we weren't exactly the most popular act at ATP when we played. In fact, I think we were probably the least popular of any acts that ever played ATP [laughs]. Our sense of the festival was that it was a forum for bands to experiment with what they do, to try different things that you wouldn't normally do at a rock festival. So we took it upon

THE TOMORROW PEOPLE (HERE AND OVERLEAF): SONIC YOUTH AT WORK ON THE NEW ALBUM IN THEIR MURRAY STREET STUDIO, NEW YORK. LEFT TO RIGHT: KIM GORDON, THURSTON MOORE



ourselves to play this 30-40 minute drone guitar piece that we were really into. When we got there and played it, we thought it was going along very well [laughs]. But after we got offstage, we got a very cold reception from people, you know, like, 'Why did you do that?' Kim Gordon: [To Moore] It wasn't entirely like that. It was a 20 minute guitar piece. And then there were some new songs that we played instrumentally that were equally foreign. It wasn't like we went on and jammed for...

TM: No, we didn't jam. We never had the intention of jamming. But we played all this instrumental music. We didn't play anything that was recognizable to anybody who was a Sonic Youth fan. But we thought that was the nature of this festival, to throw out some new ideas. And we were just lambasted. Critically, we were just completely killed by the British newspapers. Some said they were just wasting the audience's time. When they reviewed us in *Melody Maker*, there was a picture from the concert of me playing a guitar behind my head and the caption underneath said, 'Goodbye 20th century, goodbye talent.' [laughter] That was pretty much the response to what we did.

KG: [To TM] You're really exaggerating the whole thing. TM: I don't think I'm exaggerating enough! The *NME* said it was 'shite'.

KG: One of the papers said, 'This is either brilliant, or total crap.' But still they said, 'Say to the Youth for not giving people what they expect.' The majority of the people there hated it, I'm sure. But the hardcore fans were into it.

TM: I don't remember that. Maybe I'm mythologising the denigration.

Was there a guiding idea behind your curatorial selections for this year's ATP?

LR: The guiding idea was just, 'Wow, who would we like to invite?' We initially made a curatorial want list of about 300 different artists that ranged completely far and wide. Some things we knew were long shots, like Dylan or Neil Young or Ornette Coleman. We almost got Neil hooked, because we are kind of friends with him. And, if schedules had been a little different, he might have been able to do it. It basically ended up just coming down to who could make it. Then, after everything that happened with 9/11 and the rescheduling of this event, there had to be some shifts. Actually, I think that allowed us to make the bill even stronger than it was originally.

KG: It's too bad there aren't more girls playing. We tried to get Le Tigre, but...

TM: There were a bunch of women musicians. We were trying to be sort of gender conscious. We were trying to be somewhat culture conscious, too, as far as getting more acts from genres that aren't just middle-class white kids with indie rock bands. But a lot of our scene is just that. Those are our compatriots. So it's fairly heavy in that sort of thing.

But the programme still represents a pretty big range, from Eddie Vedder and Wilco to Cannibal Ox, Merzbow and Cecil Taylor.

TM: When Pearl Jam asked us to tour with them [in autumn 2000], none of us were very big Pearl Jam

enthusiasts. But we've known Eddie through the years through mutual friends. During the Pearl Jam tour, sometimes he would go out before us and play a solo acoustic set of two or three songs that he'd been working on. And they were startlingly good.

The festival was originally scheduled for mid-October of last year, but then was postponed in the aftermath of 11 September. Does the new programme reflect anything of the experience of these events?

LR: I don't really think so, at this point. We really brainstormed a lot after the 11th. If it was still going to go on in October, we were going to change it around a bit and maybe turn the entire thing into a benefit and memorial concert. But when it got pushed to March, it seemed less pressing to do that. We had already done a big benefit concert of our own in New York, where we curated an evening at the Bowery Ballroom with all the money going to a few different charities. We had Cat Power and Tom Verlaine and some spoken word artists and other things. And we raised quite a good deal of money. So we felt pretty good about that. And then once the shows got pushed to March, we thought it would be better to let things rest as far as all of the September 11 stuff was concerned. We didn't want to make this festival somehow tied to a tragic event. The festival represents a lot of the genres Sonic Youth have been associated with over the years: punk rock, free jazz, minimalism, art noise, experimental electronics, postmodern poetry, etc. But the one thing missing is the kind of modern composition Sonic Youth performed on *Goodbye 20th Century*.



LR: It's true. We were pretty concerned about that kind of balance. We tried to invite a bunch of different people like that. We were talking to Alvin Lucier and James Tenney, at one point. Somehow it proved very difficult to arrange. And, sadly, it is a bit lacking on that end. I guess partly we were trying to put people in a context that would work. In the context of this kind of a festival, given that we didn't know the venues or really what was going to happen, we thought that some of those people might be a little sensitive about the kind of audience they got, and that maybe if the audience wasn't as sufficiently respectful of the music... I don't know. A couple of people that we wanted to invite, we couldn't figure out a situation in which we thought they would be happy with the performance options. So, you know, we tried.

You toured Europe last summer performing the *Goodbye 20th Century* pieces. How did that go?
LR: We thought it was a great success. You know, there were occasionally crowds that were a little confused. In spite of how heavy the ads pressed what was going to be happening, there were still people who sort of expected that if they showed up they'd hear "Teenage Riot" or whatever, and we weren't doing that stuff. So there were your handful of disgruntled fans in London, that handful was very loud [laughs]. TM: It was like a war in the audience. During the silent parts, like in the Cage piece, you would hear some guy in the back yelling, 'This is crap!' And then we'd hear another guy in the front row yelling back, 'Why don't you go home, mate!' It was nutty. But almost

everywhere else, all through Europe, it was all very great. We played the Sonar electronic music festival in Barcelona, though, and that was terrible, because it was this raver audience. We were there playing these pieces by early pioneers of electronic music and it felt as if we were at an avant garde jazz festival playing...
KQ: Honky tonk.

TM: Yeah. King Oliver or something [laughs].
LR: But, I think, overall, the audiences really liked it. And I think that, at this point, our audience is willing to follow us wherever we might choose to go. We had a lot of fun doing that tour because it really allowed us the possibility of going out and playing this music that we find really interesting, putting it into a context that it's not usually seen in, and exposing a lot of different people to it. We thought the concerts were a great success. We mixed in a few songs in the end — like "She Is Not Alone" [from the first LP, *Sonic Youth*] and Side2Side [from 2000's *NYC Ghosts & Flowers*] — that we felt 'sed what we do to some of the pieces we were playing. We also incorporated a lot of local performers at every stop on the tour for some of the pieces that needed more than the five of us. So we got to play with a lot of interesting people: Pita in Barcelona, Frederic Rozwaski... it was really a blast to do. It's just great to be able to go out and present all this strange music and see that, for the most part, the audience responded to it very well.

Was it a stretch to perform that kind of live set?

LR: It wasn't really. It took a few shows to shake out a format and a sequence that worked. But I think we all

felt pretty comfortable playing the actual music. In the first few nights, there was more changing in terms of the way we structured the sets, because there are a few pieces that are very open-ended. The first few nights, we tried doing them with a very small number of people, so most of us would leave the stage and a different duo or trio would play. As it went on, we found that the people backstage wanted to be out there playing too.

Do you see *Goodbye 20th Century* as a retrospective tribute and farewell to late 20th century composition? Or do you think of that material as something that still informs your projects?

LR: For us, it was a kind of acknowledgement of a strain, or a bunch of threads of 20th century music that have been really important to us but that a large part of our audience might not realize is integral to the way we've made music right from the get-go. A lot of us have been doing improvised music for awhile now, but as a group we haven't done that outside of those spaces within our own music that call for improvisation. So, we did a record store concert in San Francisco 1998 night when we were starting to have a relationship with [Jim] O'Rourke. He wasn't really in the band yet, but he was along on that tour as an opening act. We were invited to do this in-store performance, and we didn't really want to go in and play songs. So we asked Jim and this friend of ours, Willie Winant, a San Francisco percussionist who is really well schooled and versed in that music — he was Cage's percussionist in the last decade of his life. We



did an improvised piece there, and it was out of that experience that we put together the groundwork to make *Goodbye 20th Century*. That record has definitely had a big influence on the way our music has gone since then, or it's allowed us a little bit more freedom in terms of the kind of stuff we've been putting on record. So, yeah, the experience of doing it definitely influenced what we're doing now.

KG: The record got surprisingly good reviews. I mean, we could have just been totally slaughtered.

TM: Its timing was really good, and we didn't really realise that. I think when we first issued the record we thought it was going to be one of the more obscure things we've ever done. And it sold out of its first pressing really quickly.

I hear that you have a new record in the works?

LR: Yeah, it's pretty far along. We laid a lot of the groundwork last August, when we were writing pretty much full time every day in the studio. We were on this really great pace to finish the record when September 11 happened, and that sort of shut down the whole neighbourhood, including our studio, for six or eight weeks. It took us a while to pick it back up. And, at that point, we had this other project on its heels, this film soundtrack we just did for this French director.

How did that come about?

LR: It's a film called *Demonlover* by this French director Olivier Assayas, who, in France, is considered a sort of a young reinventor of the *Nouvelle Vague*. He did a film in 1996 that got some notice called *Irma Vep*, which used a song of ours. Out of that, he

approached us to do the score for this new film. We've done some film scores in the past and it's always really fun. But it's usually taken the form where they hand you the nearly finished film and say, "These are the places where we want the music; we want two minutes here, from 8:15 to 10:15", or whatever. That's fun to do, but you never feel like you're integral to what happened with the making of the film. Olivier's idea was that he wanted to start working with us before he had even shot a frame of film. So we were sending him rough things that we were doing. He was listening to them and playing them for the actors on the set as they were shooting. And then, each week, he'd send us a reel of that week's dailies. The music we would send would influence his thinking about the soundtrack, and the visuals he would send would then give us more insight into how the movie was going. It was really fun, because it went back and forth like that from the very beginning of his shooting schedule. Some of the music is really aggressive and adventurous for a film soundtrack. I think it's gonna be pretty amazing.

KG: We're also just starting to work on a long-term project documenting radical women in music. A local multimedia firm called Titanium phoned us after reading a comment I made in *The Wire* (invisible Jukebox, issue 197) saying "somebody should make a documentary on women in avant garde music".

TM: We want it to be a visual and aural documentation that gives a sense of history and of the numbers involved. I mean, people know that the world of avant

garde music is really relative to women's creative measures. So we're trying to put all that into some kind of a timeline and make it interesting. We're trying to figure out the best way to present something like this, maybe create a DVD or something that could be presented on public television or could lend itself to an exposition at the Experience Music Project.

KG: We want it to be something that gives a real 3D sense of the complexity and overlapping of things. I think it'd be cool to have a room where people could actually perform scores by Pauline Oliveros or people like that, to make it accessible. I think it's really great for kids to be able to have that accessibility, the idea of making your own music, that it's not mythologised.

Can you tell me more about the new record?

TM: I think we're calling it *Murray Street*, which is where our studio is in Manhattan. I like it because it sounds like *Momson Hotel* or *Abbey Road*.

Will it reflect the experiences of your *Goodbye 20th Century* material or your various improv projects?

KG: Not as much on this record as on the last couple of them. This record's really back to song structures. Actually, Thurston wrote most of the songs on acoustic guitar. But they've become these classic rock epics [laughs].

TM: I don't know about that.

KG: It's quite different than the last couple of records.

TM: You know, this is our 21st year, so we're now "of age". This is our first adult record [laughter]. All Tomorrow's Parties takes place 14-17 March at Los Angeles UCLA. See *Out There* for details.

The Primer

The Wire's bimonthly guide to the essential recordings of a selected artist or genre.
This month: David Keenan explores the frontiers of the experimental rock kingdom of Sonic Youth. Illustration: Savage Pencil

They came to raise rock, not to bury it. Building on groundwork laid by The Velvet Underground, The Stooges, The MC5 and Patti Smith, Sonic Youth have fully articulated the common aesthetic that links such outsider strains as free jazz, avant-garde composition, No Wave and teenage rock 'n' roll, all of which had previously seemed self-contained and resolutely non-transferable. While helping foster an international alternative rock community, from the bastard noise of post-hardcore groups like The Butthole Surfers, Pussy Galore and Big Black to stadium-hopping Lollapalooza punks, Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley and recently joined bassist Kim O'Rourke continue to push their unique vision ever forwards, drawing sustenance and inspiration from countless diverse musical strains.

Sonic Youth have always been quick to refute any notion of being anything other than a contemporary rock outfit, aligning themselves early on with the burgeoning American hardcore movement more than the downtown art scene, despite their roots lying firmly in the latter via their links with No Wave. Glenn Branca's guitar ensembles and Gordon's experience contributing to *Artforum*. Yet their working strategies were largely intuitive, with the group having no official exposure to the Rosetta Stone of experimental music theory and practice. "When I first tried to play Thurston jazz records," Gordon told Rob Young back in the Wire 197, "he wouldn't have anything to do with it. All he would listen to was hardcore." Their use of prepared guitars, alternative tunings and other "non-musical" sound sources was born out of an intense, almost reverential approach to rock's freakout potential. The basic elements of their music appear relatively simple: they build largely from straightforward rock rhythms, with Shelley's drums providing a solid anchor from which the guitars spin out into explosive peaks or clanging drones. All this underpins Gordon's, Moore's and Ranaldo's distinctive, untrained vocals, whining/singing/screaming lyrics ranging from ironic commentaries on pop culture icons to hallucinatory images of totemic power. SY's devotion to rock has spawned a phantasmagoric amplification of all they believed it stood for.

Contemporary music thrives on invigorating, unresolvable paradigm leaps, whether it's Krautrock groups like Can finding liberation in the psychedelic depths of "I Am The Walrus," or Keef Haiano hailing a new world in the buzz of the amps during the dying minutes of Blue Cheer's "Second Time Around", it's as if a portal opens for a second and only those who are really listening see the opportunity to leap right through it. Sonic Youth's portal came both from No Wave's refusal – Lydia Lunch's squealing, anarchic side guitar – and hardcore's burn out – the way guitarist Greg Ginn would extend Black Flag tracks into touring instrumental workouts.

Sonic Youth also give the lie to the old myth (inevitably perpetrated by writers and musicians who don't share anything like the same degree of obsession for their subject) that record collectors never make good musicians. By dint of their slavish devotion to the cause, collectors can make the best musicians. Sonic Youth's insatiable enthusiasm for contemporary manifestations of rebusnik sound has

meant that they have long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with music's fringe zones. They've championed avant groups like New Zealand's The Dead C and New York's No-Neck Blues Band – both of whom have further explored routes first signposted by SY – while also enjoying a routine display with the mainstream, signing to Geffen in 1989 and bringing dissonance and freedom to stadiums around the world through their relationship with groups like REM and Nirvana. Indeed, their evangelical zeal spills over into the running of several of their own labels dedicated to making available the kind of oddball beauty that would otherwise slip through the cracks. Moore's Ecstatic Peace! imprint has documented everyone from outsider saxophonists like Arthur Doyle and Frank Lowe through Karlsruhe Stockhausen to New Zealand drones like RST and Birchville Cat Motel, while Shelley's Smells Like Records has focused on the esoteric American beauty of songwriters Tim Foljahn, Lee Hazlewood and Cat Power. Besides their label activities, all the members of Sonic Youth are involved in countless side projects and offshoots, duelling with first generation European improvisers, trading tapes with bedroom punk affiliates and going head-to-head with the new generation of turntables and turntop operations. Whatever they're tackling, they do it with a healthy reverence, proving that rock made by intelligent, culturally literate musicians needn't be a terminally po-faced proposition.

THE COACHMEN FAILURE TO THRIVE

NEW ALLIANCE NAR0203 12"

GLENN BRANCA SONGS 77-79

ATMOSPHERIC ALPIS CD

SYMPHONY NO 1 (TONAL PLEXUS)

ROIR RIJ000846 CD

Thurston Moore's first group, The Coachmen, offer few clues to Sonic Youth's future. Still, their folk-primitive sound, with nods to The Modern Lovers and Television, is intriguing enough to be more than just an historical curiosity. The Coachmen were the branch of future beatnik artist and illustrator, JD King, in Christmas 1976 King bumped into Moore over a Velvet Underground bin in a used record store out in Providence, Rhode Island. They eventually came together as The Coachmen after the two of them hooked up in New York in 1977. Their sound was primitive even by the antediluvian standards of the day – indeed they had to give up on the idea of covering The Modern Lovers' "She Crackled" because they couldn't figure out the chords. The archival recordings gathered on *Failure To Thrive* date from 1979 and sound closest to teenage post-punk groups like Orange Juice or even Josef K. With Moore's lead guitar pealing off the cutest melodic British Invasionisms, only King's surreal, deadpan vocals marked them out as post-Velvet New Yorkers. The Coachmen gaggled irregularly at loft parties, bars and, most significantly, CBGBs, where the group once shared a bill with keyboard-heavy new wave group The Flocks, featuring Lee Ranaldo.

Through The Coachmen, Moore also got to meet Kim Gordon, when she attended their perfunctory gig. At the time she was playing guitar in CPM, a trio including

Stanton Miranda who was also involved with Rhys Chatham, an avant-composer experimenting with massed guitar ensemble pieces, and Christine Hahn, who played with another future guitar orchestra conductor, Glenn Branca, in The Static.

At the time Branca was also part of Theoretical Girls, a quartet featuring future Sonic Youth producer Wharton Tiers. But it was The Static who provided the closest blueprint for the early Sonic Youth sound. The Static were a three piece whose line-up was completed by artist Barbara Ess (whose *Radio Guitar* album with Peggy Ahwesh has just been released on Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label – see *The Wire* 216). Their only single, "My Relationship"/"Don't Let Me Stop You", included on the Theoretical Girls/Static compilation *Songs 77-79*, is a pummeling slice of sociopathic klang, which utilises the kind of highly percussive guitar sound that Sonic Youth would later deploy on pieces like "The World Looks Red" and "I'm Insane". Even this early on, Branca was experimenting with altered tunings and bombastic guitar instrumentals, which he later expanded into "hard rock symphonies" such as *Symphony No 1* (Tonal Plexus). For the performances captured by ROIR, recorded in July 1981, Branca assembled a sizeable guitar army, augmented by horns, keyboards and percussion, whose ranks included Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo alongside Barbara Ess and Wharton Tiers. Despite its symphonic title, it's a baroque rock noise, especially in its first movement, which marries the juggernaut momentum of Neu! and La Düsseldorf with Heavy Metal minimalism. Branca used to cite Mahler and Aerosmith as his main influences back then. You can hear what he meant.

SONIC YOUTH

SONIC YOUTH

NEUTRAL, NEUTRAL 01 LP

SONIC DEATH

BLAST FIRST 01P92 CD

As well as playing cupid to guitarists Moore and Ranaldo, Glenn Branca, in his role as Neutral label boss, also midwifed Sonic Youth's first record. At this stage they were a quartet with Moore and Ranaldo on guitar, Gordon on bass and drummer Richard T. Edson (better known today as an actor, with parts in *Stranger Than Paradise* and Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*). The Neutral label evolved a souzsy downtown NYC aesthetic epitomised by Swans' savage first album, *Filth*. Over the winter of 1981-82, Sonic Youth recorded a slew of freshly penned songs which they had never played out before. It showed. Producing themselves, the guitars are slightly naked without the freefloating fields of dissonance that would soon characterise their work. However the Sonic Youth basics were already intact even this far back. "I Dreamed I Dream" is an embryonic version of the haunting monologues that Gordon would often front, only here Ranaldo doubles up on backing vocals, effecting a beautifully sung counterpoint. "The Burning Ship" prefigures Moore's way of combining a dash of free-associated images and concurring, atonal guitar lines, often to extremely disturbing effect. But the live *Sonic Death* is the most essential artefact of early Youth. Originally a homemade cassette, which launched Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label, its collage of live freakouts, skuzzy home tapes,



The Primer

audience abuse and inane conversations at once document and prophesy the excited, puzzled and sometimes hostile reception the group's raw tonalities met in their early years. Songs are announced and then abruptly faded or sped up on wanky tapes, while electronic rifts cut to arguments about hamburgers. Between the twadcracks there are moments where the group coalesce with tonorial force, highlighted by a live version of "Early American," from 1983's *Kill Yr Idiot* EP, where Gordon sounds lost and dazed, his voice carving sobriety from the static, while Moore and Rinaldo light up the night with phosphorous atonal sparks.

SONIC YOUTH CONFUSION IS SEX NEUTRAL NEUTRAL LP

BAD MOON RISING
BLAST FIRST AFFPFI CD

The contemporary Sonic Youth sound itself first formed into being in 1983's *Confusion Is Sex*. Lyrically scarred with grotesque images of sadism, body horror and dystopian sci-fi, the album marked a descent into some of the places from which they finally flew clear five years later with *Daydream Nation*. Their aesthetic was at its most punk here, meaning track lengths or its on the shorter side. But looking back, some of its most interesting moments are pieces thought of as minor at the time, even as they devastatingly illustrate the efficacy of their newly derived alternate tunings. The primitively recorded album closer, "Lee Is Free," is a minimalist metallic symphony consisting of stretched steel strings played percussively to generate endlessly overlapping concentric patterns. Gordon's half-chanted, half sung "Protect Me You" is an emotionally exacerbated proto-choral landscape. Reputedly recorded in the walk-in freezer of a deli near the studio, "Freezer Burn" is the sort of mid-age high buzz of fuzzy feedback that would launch a thousand space rockers, despite the stark musical mundanity through, when it erupts into a raucous live take of "The Stages." It's *Wanna Be Your Dog*. But rockers like "Immunity" and its scything monomelodic guitars, pack the biggest visceral punch. The album's uniquely murky sound was caused in part by a can of cola, which was accidentally spilled over the master tapes.

Sleeved in stunning American Gothic artwork that sets a flaming pumpkin head against a Manhattan skyline, 1985's *Bad Moon Rising* is where Sonic Youth really start to stretch out. It's very much a studio record, with tracks segueing into each other on warped Motown strips of guitar noise. *Bad Moon Rising* also marks the beginning of their interest in pop cultural autopsy with its inclusion of the "Death Valley 69" single, a demonic duet between Moore and Lydia Lunch that evokes the spiral of insanity that culminated in Charles Manson's apocalyptic murders in California. More significantly, the song allows the contours of their rising guitars to shape the logic of the arrangement. From here on in, the structure and mood of each track is determined by the physics and physicality of the guitar; how it's strung, string gauge, what tuning it holds the best, and so on. Fortunately you don't have to conquer tonal string theory to dig the resulting compositions. More organic and amorphous, they forsake conventional verse/chorus forms in favour of a dialectic of expansion and contraction. Besides, *Bad Moon Rising* is where Sonic Youth started going off in earnest. Moore's stammered intro to "Justise Is Might" is an early incarnation of his Royal Tuff Titty persona, and Rinaldo's use of tapes is startlingly effective, especially when a snatch of "The Stages' overbearing anthem, "Not Right," nps through his amp.

SONIC YOUTH WALLS HAVE EARS NOT RECORDED NO NUMBER 32LP

EVOL
BLAST FIRST AFFPFI CD
SISTER
BLAST FIRST AFFPFI CD

Regardless of its dubious provenance, *Walls Have Ears*, aka *Blood On Brighton Beach*, is a fantastic audio documentary of Sonic Youth's autumn 1985 UK tour, culminating in a "Winter Beach Party" in November on Brighton's freezing shore. Reviewing that event for the UK rock weekly Sounds, Edwin Pouncey vividly described it as a witches' Sabbath, with the group struggling to cope with the elements before circles of bedraggled punters huddled around tiny bonfires. The set is volently energetic, with "Making The Nature Scene" (here retitled "Blood On Brighton Beach") sounding like Blue Cheer tracking Sammy Hagar's "Bad Motor Scooter". But the majestic "Expressway To Yr Skull" is the highlight. It is at once a robustly beautiful song and declaration of musical freedom, where Moore's celebratory, quasi-cosmic sex imagery "We're gonna live the exploding look/In the midnight madness/We're gonna find the meaning of feeling good/And we're gonna stay there as long as we think we should" is offset by the howling air raid sirens ripped from Rinaldo's guitar "prepared" with drumsticks and sawedwires wedged beneath the strings, before the track trails off into infinity on the back of tapped out harmonics. Sonically speaking, it blew open the aural cobwebs of many future guitar-blessed speakers. The Dead C's Bruce Russell, for one, claims its rumour gun alone inspired him to make music, citing his first (pre-Corpus Hermeticum) label Xpressway.

Retitled "The Crucifixion Of Sean Penn" or "Madonna, Sean And Me", a studio version of "Expressway" closes the original vinyl version of their 1986 album *EVOL*. The album was trailed with a single version of "Starpower", the group's wicked first step at bubblegum, but it's in no way indicative of the rest. *EVOL* turned phonetics and dynamics on their head with a series of psychotically forbidding songforms animated by the chillingly human howls down from Moore and Rinaldo's long-suffering guitars. *EVOL* was also Sonic Youth's first Stateside release on SST, the premier American hardcore label (Black Flag, Minutemen, etc) whose militant rock work ethic inspired Moore and co to get in the van. But, for all Moore's hardcore sympathies, Sonic Youth's music was already a world away from the muscular asceticism that characterised much of SST's output. Highlights include "Marilyn Moore", a purgatorial sludge that combines the clank of midnight trains with an eerily lonesome ambience; Gordon's somnambulant Hitchcock tribute "Shadow Of A Doubt"; and an early Kerouac-inspired road monologue from Rinaldo, "In The Kingdom 1919", which Moore sabotages with a firework thrown at a clearly terrified Rinaldo in mid-song. *EVOL* also marked drummer Steve Shelley's Sonic Youth debut, in place of Bob Bert. Tight and fairly controlled, Shelley wasn't an immediately obvious choice, at least not until you realise how well his percussion throbs serve as a homey beacon throughout the group's wildest extrapolations.

Reputedly intended as a concept album based on visionary sci-fi author Philip K Dick's writings, *Sister* (1987) is a much harder record, Sonic Youth jumpy-jump guitar punk's crowman stance by crosswiring it with alternate tunings and bursts of atonal white noise. Mostly recorded live in an all-tube studio, *Sister* is the closest they've got to replicating the Sonic Youth live experience. Aggressively cranked guitar leads ("Got A Catholic Bird" locomotive intensity; Gordon's

hallucogenic "Beauty Lies In The Eye" sounds like a dream dreamed across centuries. But the rockers really define the set, especially the euphorically raging "White Kross" and the deranged cover of "Hot Wire My Heart", originally recorded by San Francisco murder punks Crime. *Sister* stands as the greatest rock 'n' roll record of the 80s - if that isn't a contradiction in terms.

SAUTER/DIETRICH/MOORE BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD FORCED EXPOSURE FE013 CD

LEE RINALDO
FROM HERE TO INFINITY
BLAST FIRST AFFPFI 12"

HARRY CREWS
NAKED IN GARDEN HILLS
BLAST FIRST AFFPFI CD

"We never considered ourselves as being 'out of tune'," Thurston Moore told an interviewer from the British TV arts programme *The South Bank Show* in 1989. "Out of standard tuning, maybe, but we think it's bolstering the tradition of rock to break out and freak with it... so to speak." "Freaking with it" brought the group to a creative juncture arrived at by players from parallel disciplines like free jazz, sound art and modern composition. Happily the Sonic Youth constitution encouraged group members to go out and explore new links. Moore's earliest and most rewarding investigations of instant composition were undertaken in the company of two horn-bearing thirds of Borbetomagus, New York's nastiest snuff jazz trio. The results are below. Moore swings the great black weight of his mudcraked guitar as a deep, almost rhythmic backdrop for Jim Sauter and Gon Oetrich's salvaging toghorns. The elevenets by "Thomas Pynchon" succinctly sum it up: Two free men met a slave. Everyone goes home barefoot. Right-tuition on."

Rinaldo's 1986 vinyl sound art piece, *From Here To Infinity*, features 13 minute-long, locked-groove tracks designed for minimal/minimalist listening. Ranging from beautiful electronic whitenoise through low level hums to some punk tumblism that anticipates his collaborations with avant tumbler Christian Marclay, it almost outdoes Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* in terms of alienating thoroughness. If you can't find an original pressing, the Rinaldo compilation, *East Axis* (Avalanche ALP36 CD), includes a couple of examples, along with early live material, singles and a bonus track taken from the same home-taping sessions that produced *Confusion Is Sex*'s "Lee Is Free". Kim Gordon, meanwhile, formed the shortlived two Harry Crews with Lydia Lunch on guitar/vocals and professional wrestler Sadee Mae on drums. Their declared intention was to promote the work of author Harry Crews, a tough-as-steel chronicler of Southern life on the slaps. Their crushing nose guitar and banshee vocals made them highly persuasive advocates of the Crews' creed. Appropriately enough, Gordon aggressively projects her voice, stopping it off its narcotic quality, as she begins to mould the rockier persona soon to be unveiled on *Daydream Nation*.

CICONE YOUTH THE WHITE ALBUM

BLAST FIRST AFFPFI CD

SONIC YOUTH
MASTER-DIK

BLAST FIRST AFFPFI 12"

SY alter-ego Ciccone Youth's détournement of Madonna's "Into The Groove" paralleled similar Oedipal castrations by the likes of Negativland and Culturecide. But with Sonic Youth it's always hard to tell whether their referential embrace is ironic, passive or affectionate tribute. Their appetite for trashy pop

TOP:
EARLY
BLAST
FIRST
PRESS
SHOT,
CIRCA
1988.
BOTTOM:
SONIC
YOUTH'S
GUITAR
COLLECTION
PHOTOGRAPHED
IN
1995.
MOST
OF
THESE
INSTRUMENTS
WERE
LOST
IN
A
BURGLARY
FROM
THEIR
TOUR
VAN
SEVERAL
YEARS
LATER



PHOTO: GUY AROCH/REUTERS/PHOTODISC

The Primer

culture in all its manifestations, which by this time had overtaken their interest in American Gothic, renders the dividing line between overground and underground null and void. They exist with a foot in both, as likely to hook up with REM as Prick Decay. Their obsession with Ms. Ciccone dates back to EVDL (check "Madonna, Sean And Me"), but it was former Minuteman and Madonna fan Mike Watt who suggested forming a Madonna covers outfit. His contribution to 1988's *The White Album* is a functional, straightforward take of "Burnin' Up," but the Youth single, "Into The Groovey", is a crude, fantastic karaoke job—a bio mustache on an Athens poster—with Moore singing along to the original Madonna cut through an overloaded mic while a crunching fuzz guitar doubles up on the changes.

The *White Album* takes this cheap methodology even further, with Gordon's karaoke version of Robert Palmer's "Addicted To Love" (for which a video was shot in a booth in Macy's Department Store, New York). Sonic Youth's fanish enthusiasms have always taken them on some fruitful detours. As given away by the outsized sneaker footprint on the inside sleeve, *The White Album* was seeded by their love of hip-hop. Most tracks utilize simple, thudding drum machine patterns over which the guitarists layer waves of interference. It's as conceptually deranged as Faust's collage work, *The Faust Tapes*, and even includes a Krautrock tribute, "Two Cool Rock Chicks Listening to Neu!", which is exactly what it says. And Moore's Royal Tuff Titty persona supplies the funniest and laziest spontaneous freestyling this side of Al Gi.

The cheap-looking 12", Master-Disk (1987), now available on the CD of *Sister*, was an early prototype of *The White Album*. Its A side crosses Break Machine with Eddie Van Halen guitar courtesy Dinosaur Jr.'s J Mascis, while Moore bogs up his NYC turf. Cut up in a lunatic Nurse With Wound style, the second side is even better, with a peeping cover of The Ramones' "Beat On The Brat," seguing into lo-fi sound pieces, rehearsal jams, random impersonations (Sun Ra, Sonny Sharrock, Max Roach and George Benson turn up on guitar and vocals) and more dual rapping.

SONIC YOUTH DAYDREAM NATION

BLAST FIRST BFFP34 CD

GOO

GTFEEN 759042097 CD

With 1988's *Daydream Nation*, Sonic Youth made huge inroads into the popular consciousness, largely on the strength of its anthemic opening track "Teenage Riot", which features a great riff and hilarious ultra-slick Thurston Moore lyrics: "It'd take a teenage not to get me out of bed right now" (apparently inspired by the terminal apathy of Dinosaur Jr.'s J Mascis). But something about *Daydream*'s production stops me returning to it so often: it slightly blunts the chain-saw edges of the guitars, leaving them sounding weaker than the preceding *Sister*. But there are exceptions: the "Kissability Trilogy" (every double album's got to have one), where Gordon's snotty, lung-straining vocal runs up against Moore and Rinaldo's big crunching downstrokes; and the great, wired "Silver Rocket" once again recalls Crème. More importantly, *Daydream Nation* establishes Rinaldo as Sonic Youth's most consistent songwriting voice, with tracks like "Rain King", which marries a psychedelic West Coast melody with explosive sonic breakdowns. Caught up in the first strummings of the Seattle rock explosion sweeping America, they split a single with Seattle Grunge quartet Mudhoney, recording the latter's delinquent anthem, "Touch Me, I'm Sick", while Mudhoney returned the favour with a version of SY's "Halloween". They also took on Mudhoney as support act for their

Daydream Nation tour, which produced some of the straightest rocking shows of their career. It paid off when Geffen signed them to an unusually artist-friendly deal that has left them free to work outside the label confines. Further, invited to act in an unofficial A&R capacity, the group recommended Geffen sign Nirvana.

They made a triumphant major label debut with *Goo* (1990). Sharper sounding and more varied in attack, it works where *Daydream Nation* failed, with plenty of "for the hell of it" guitar pyrotechnics and liberal doses of gonzo humour. Rinaldo's "Mole" is the album highlight, and that's not just because he forsakes his usual semi-spoken approach to really sing it. It's a dramatic psychodrama that accelerates into the kind of locked noise that permeated *From Here To Infinity*. The first single, "Kool Thing", features Public Enemy's bemused Chuck D, who manages a half-hearted "Tell it like it is!" in reply to Gordon's demands that he "liberate us guys from male, white corporate oppression". They go public with their Carpenters obsession on "Tune (Song For Karen)", which makes great understated use of Rinaldo and Moore's increasingly melodious string work. They went on to cut a glitzy cover of "Superstar" for The Carpenters tribute album, *If I Were A Carpenter* (A&M), but here they channel messages from Karen in Heaven, where she's playing the drums again and hanging with Elvis and James Joplin. They originally cut *Goo* with Don Fleming of Gumball and J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr.; that version was certainly deeply punk, but on balance the crackling clarity and teenage/glam feel of the released mix is exactly how it should be.

WILLIAM HOOKER

SHAMBALLA

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW151 CD

WILLIAM HOOKER/

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY/LEE RANALDO

BOUQUET

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW264 CD

THURSTON MOORE WITH TOM SURGAL

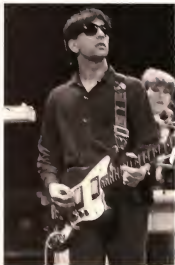
KLANGFARBENMELODIE

CORPUS HERMETICUM HWRM5011 CD

One of the major catalysts in Thurston Moore's wholehearted conversion to New York avant garde and Improv was his encounter with William Hooker, a free drummer who first came to prominence during the New Thing's second wave in the 1970s. He reappeared in 93 with *The Firmament/Fury* (Silkheart), but it was his sextet album, *Subconscious*, released on Moore's Ecstatic Pezcol label, that brought home the spiritual and emotional power of free jazz to a whole new generation. Mixing intense bursts of linear proto-rock propulsion with spurges of multi-directional temporal defiance, Hooker makes a well equipped sparring partner for Moore and Rinaldo. On 93's *Shamballa*, a series of duets with Moore and avant guitarist Elliott Sharp, the startling vectors of Moore's freeform guitar recall the undulating effervescent streams of John Coltrane's interstellar tenor sax. Hooker starts off holding down tight rhythmic shapes until Moore ditches the riffs for sound textures, freeing up Hooker to pilot them all the way out. Even as the context requires him to subtly reconfigure his vocabulary, Moore's distinctive guitar is instantly recognizable.

For his *Bouquet* date with Hooker and Christian Marclay, recorded in 2000, Rinaldo augments his arsenal with chains of bells and electronic devices, but again his guitar work is what really stands out, though the way he and Marclay relate sonically sometimes makes it difficult to work out who's doing what. Hooker, however, is in his element, and with no one willing to state the pulse, he gets plenty of opportunity to stretch his vertical logic to the max.

TOP:
LEFT
TO
RIGHT:
LEE
RANALDO
PLAYS
WITH
GLENN
BRANCA'S
ORCHESTRA,
LONDON
RIVERSIDE
THEATRE.
1993:
KIM
GORDON
IN
ACTION.
MID-80S:
THURSTON
MOORE
DUSTAGE
AT
TIBETAN
FREEDOM
CONCERT.
1997:
BELDOW:
SOVEREIGNS
OF
THE
DAYDREAM
NATION.
PUBLICITY
SHOOT,
1988



PHOTOS: BILLY HART (2), GARY MARSH (MUSICIAN), NANA (3) AND MICHAEL THOMPSON

The Primer

Tracking Rinaldo and Moore's extracurricular activities is a near impossible task, but it's exactly this kind of energy and openness to new situations that feeds back into Sonic Youth and keeps them sharp. In addition to Houlihan, Moore has kept himself loose by playing with saxophonist Evan Parker (*The Promise on Material*, Sonori), more than once with Loren Mazzacane Connors (MMCR, also featuring Rinaldo and guitarist Jean-Marc Montero, on *Numero Zero Audio*, is the pick of the bunch), DJ Spooky (Addem *Werfare* on Outpost) and guitarist Nels Cline (*In-Store on Father Yod*). He has also cut some powerful sides with his regular spinning partners, the avant percussionists William Winant and Tom Sungal (*Klingenbergmeide*, his duo set with Sungal, is one of their best). Recorded live in 1995, there's a nice slurred quality to the sound, with Moore alternating chugging clouds of sonic debris and screaming bursts of feedback, while the Shave-like Sungal launches great dovebanging riffs on his kit.

SONIC YOUTH 4 TUNNA BRIX

GEFFEN 0650453 CD

FREE KITTEN

SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION

KILL ROCK STONES KRS007 CD

LEE RINALDO

DIRTY WINDOWS

BAROCCO BARD17 CD

TWO DOLLAR GUITAR

TRAIN SONGS

SMELLS LIKE SEXMUS CD

As one of the great covers groups, Sonic Youth were the sole reason to pick up any of the tally tribute albums scattered through the 1990s. Their version of Neil Young's "Computer Age" on *The Bridge* (Caroline), sung by Lee Rinaldo, is a great example of their alchemical ability to turn a hit into shining gold, as is the ragey glory of their "Within You Without You" on *The Beatles* tribute *Sergeant Pepper Knew My Father* (a compilation released with the NME). But they've yet to top the John Peel session they cut at Media Vile in 1989, which consisted solely of riddling Fall covers and released here as *4 Tunna Brix*. Their riddling take on "My New House" stretches to eight minutes. Elsewhere they drive through hurricane punk versions of "Rowche Rumble" and "Psycho Maria", throwing in as many Mark E Smithisms as possible.

A contentious cover of Serge Gainsbourg's "Teene Weenie Boppe" opens *Free Kitten*'s 1997 fun garage punk session, *Sentimental Education*. Kim Gordon formed *Free Kitten* after seeing *Royal Trux* on stage, and being blown away by the purity of their non-standard rock line-up. Here she's joined by Julie Cafritz, formerly of NYC soul rockers Pussy Galore and STP, Mark (bald of Pavement and Yoshimi of Japanese noise connoisseurs Boredoms. *Free Kitten* take the gasoline glow of early Royal Trux and mess it up with cops from The Shaggs and the international pop underground. The highlight is libent whizkid DJ Spooky's stirring intervention, "DJ Spooky's Spatialized Christian Express Mix", which sounds like the entire album run through a cement mixer. Outside of Rinaldo's extracurricular noise work, he's also written lot of spontaneous prose, mostly in the form of tour journals, that speaks in a language as personal as his hero Jack Kerouac's (Rinaldo also helped assemble the Kerouac tribute album, *Kicks Joy Darkness*, and arranged parts of the music for Kerouac's archival *Reads Do The Road*, both released by Rykodisc). Rinaldo's best spoken word collection, *Dirty Windows* (1999), finds him out searching for "hard facts on the highway", his yellowed reefs of

memory underscored with musical colour from Michael Marley of The Dead C, the late Epic Soundtracks and SY comrades Steve Shelley and Thurston Moore. He also got a great illustrated travelogue, "Notebook", on *Amirio Ramp* (1996, Starlight Furniture Company) but it's trumped by the title track, which is the sound of steel angel wings circling on tiry puffs of feedback.

Where Rinaldo takes to the road, *Two Dollar Guitar* ride the rods on the transcontinental instrumental album *Train Songs*. Normally *Two Dollar Guitar* is a vehicle for the outsider songs of singer/songwriter Tim Fojahan. Here, with Smells Like label boss Steve Shelley on drums, the group musically evoke the desert escape of Neil Young at his most electrifying with sleepy pre-rock Americana and the clank of old signal boxes in a paean to stations long since left off the map.

SONIC YOUTH WASHING MACHINE

GEFFEN 0650453 CD

A THOUSAND LEAVES

GEFFEN 0650453 CD

NYC GHOSTS & FLOWERS

GEFFEN 0650453 CD

On its release, 1992's *Dirty* album for Geffen seemed a logical consolidation of Sonic Youth's increasingly structured approach to noise. Listening back, you can hear how its slightly anaemic quality heralded a small creative slump. If Rinaldo's "Wish Fulfillment" still sounds great and Kim's "Drunk Butterflies" explodes out of the gate, their arrangements for "Sugar Kane" and the "100%" single are distressingly ordinary. Caught up in a heavier touring schedule, it sounded like they were deliberately writing songs with stadium scale dynamics, operating under the illusion that a slightly brushed finish was all it took to smuggle their avant leanings past the Pearl Jam fans and into the popular psyche. *Experimental, Jet Set, Trash* and *No Star* (1994, Geffen) was even more disappointing, despite their avowed intention to make a punk-primitive record in the wake of the last few Geffen sides. By this point Kurt Cobain's suicide had effectively ended the alternative rock honeymoon launched by the phenomenal success of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit". Perhaps the dawning realisation that Sonic Youth had probably reached their maximum audience potential anyway freed them up psychologically once more. Now unbundled by upwardly curving career concerns, they got back on course with *Washing Machine* (1995). The sidelong jam "The Diamond Sea" recalls the great, blasted architecture of "Expressway To Yr Skull".

Another factor in their turnaround was Sonic Youth building their own studio and establishing their own label, SYR, as a repository for any material that was too extreme for Geffen to handle. Their SYR run of releases has also turned out to be an ingenious way of documenting work in progress. No longer having to watch the clock bleed Kim Gordon up to return to guitar, and her playing on *A Thousand Leaves* (1996) revitalises Sonic Youth's guitar attack. She admits to not being as well versed in the language of improvisation as Moore and Rinaldo, and her playing feels all the freer for its lack of any conscious reference points. On the opening "Contre Le Sexisme", her lugubrious vocal harks back to the austere half-light of "Early American", as the guitars shaver the track with tentative sparks or clank it in low level murmurs, while Steve Shelley sounds like he's sorting boxes at the bottom of a tunnel. The spindly intricacy of the guitars, and the group's attention to sonic minutiae make parts of *A Thousand Leaves* sound more like Tom Verlaine's original Television blueprint.

garage punks with an ornate take on Albert Ayler's *Spiritual Unity*.

Expanding the expressive possibilities of this new, specially detailed approach paid off in droves on NYC Ghosts & Flowers (2000). "Renegade Princess" is a great two-hour punk number that sounds like plugged in Modern Lovers led by a teen-angst tough, before fading into forlorn nappies of damaged guitar. The album even has some discernible lead lines, most bawlingly on Gordon's "Nevermind (What Was It Anyway?)", with a snaking guitar sounding like nursery-rhyme note patterns throughout. The opening notes to the title track, lightly struck from a couple of open strings, sends shivers down your spine. Then Rinaldo narrates one of his most affecting monologues, while the group tentatively build chords into a masonic throbbing that recalls the Kosmic music of Manuel Gotsching's *Ash Ra Tempel*.

SONIC YOUTH GOODBYE 20TH CENTURY

SYR 425CD

KIM GORDON/IKUE MORI/DJ OLIVE

SYR5

SYR5 CD

Brought in as wild card producer for NYC Ghosts, avant all-rounder Jan O'Rourke has since been inducted as Sonic Youth's new bass player. Their relationship flowered during an earlier collaboration that became the third SYR EP release. His bass role allows Gordon's guitar playing to come to the fore in a move that has made Sonic Youth's sound slightly less aggressive and more introverted. Recorded in 2000, Gordon's trio date with Ikue Mori (ex-drummer with No Wave's DNA, now with a string of excellent experimental drum machine releases on Trakki) and DJ Olive is a series of meticulous electronic improvisations positioned somewhere between Los Angeles Free Music Society ecstasies, straight-faced IRCAM squelch and the kind of early electronics experiments *Rough Trade* and *Mute* used to release. Gordon sings like a cult-up, obsessing over repetitious loops of almost infantile significance punctuated by little perfunctory guitar strums and juddering rhythmic bursts. Mori's lush atmospheres create a sense of deep, silent space inside which every movement glows with obsessive detail.

Bidding farewell to the utopian experiments that motivated 100 years of avant garde composition, Sonic Youth's "covers" album, *Goodbye 20th Century*, has a strangely nostalgic feel. Besides the O'Rourke-sungmented line-up, the double set features contributions from New Music legends like Fluxus operative and Tap Mahal Traveller Takehisa Kosugi, composer and John Cage associate Christian Wolff, and percussionist William Winant, alongside SY studio producer/engineer Wharton Tiers, Christian Marclay and Gordon and Moore's daughter Coco (whose take on Yoko Ono's "Voice Piece For Soprano" is truly primal). Despite the forbidding nature of the terrain covered, which includes compositions by Steve Reich, John Cage and Cornelius Cardew, the results still sound very much like Sonic Youth. Inevitably the group work best on the pieces that encourage the greatest level of individual interpretation. Written especially for the group, Pauline Oliveros's "Six For New Time" is particularly effective.

Their interpretations offer invigorating proof of the way underground rock and conservatory avant garde have developed along parallel lines, even if few on either side of the tracks hitherto cared to admit the fact. Countless sound thinkers have interpreted the music; the point, as Sonic Youth have always maintained, is to change it. □

TOOLS
YOU
CAN
TRUST
TRADEMARK
GUITAR
ABUSE
FROM
RANALDO
(TOP)
AND
MOORE



PHOTOS: BLOOMINGDALE'S (TOP); MICHAEL O'NEILL (BOTTOM)

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

All Tomorrow's Parties 15

Therapy Session
"Tune Days" (ATPR CD3)
Bonnie Prince Billy
"Early Morning Melody" (ATPR CD3)
Seis Yacht
"Fathoms" (ATPR CD3)
Timberlakes
"Bubble" (Early Day Soundtrack) (Sleppers Banquet)
Borealis
"Super Now" (ATPR CD3)
Wino Nuckala
"Storm Weather" (Socialist Recordings)
Page M
"Over Jordan" (Dog City)
High Dependency Unit
"Concurrence" (Flying Nuts)
Fugazi
"The Argument" (Dusthead)
Mighty Flashlight
"Mighty Flashlight" (Jade Tree)
Redhead
"Kisses Out" (Parlophone)
23 Skidoo
"Sweet Songs" (Narni)
Crescent De
"Straight On The DTC" (Del Jul)
Vincent Gallo
"When" (Ward)
Russell Hazell
"Magenta Amplification" (ATPR CD3)

KindaMuzik 15

Lo Tige
"Faintest Sweetestakes" (Shoko On Speed)
Millennium
"Outside The Screen Rock" (FIAS)
The Hunt
"Dent" (Theat)
Tapo-Gardes
"The Good Defense" (Sleazy/Sleaz)
Roky Erickson
"The End One" (Plex Dual)
Jenks & The Pussycats
"Stop Look And Listen" (Rund)
No-Neck Blues Band
"Skids And Stones May Break My Bones" (Reverend)
Naked City
"Rude" (Disk Union)
Morise Feldman
"Strong Current" (10 Unit Hat)
Stars Of The Lid
"The Tired Sounds Of" (Kavay)
Sue Shinn
"On Hush" (Klavik)
Fennaz
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"Coloured Works" (Track)
Johna Coltrane
"Interstellar Space Impulse"

15 Musicians' Books (non-autobiographical)

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Lydia Lunch (Creston Books)
The Cassanese
Michael Gao (2 19-61)
Not And Cold
Richard Hell (PowerHouse)
Tenants
Bob Dylan (Macmillan)
And The Sea Saw The Angel
Rick Gao (Black Spring Press)
Raise!
Felt (Brick JOP Putnam's Sons)
Frank Spikes My Father
Nancy Sinatra (Pocket Books)
Go Tell The Mountains
Jeffrey Lee Pierce (2 19-61)
Heaven's Gate Of Grandeur
Henry Rollins (Bizarre Press)
Go Now
Richard Hell (Scribner)
Alabama Williams
Thurston Moore (Water Row Press)
Judas
Peter Sallis (Fisher Publications)
Victory Cheap
Neil Hargrett (Dog City)
Krutchrockcamp
John Cope (Prest Heritage)
Adulterous Anonymous
Lydia Lunch & Eamon Corcoran (Grave Press)

The Office Ambience

Anti-Pop Consortium
Anytime (Ward)
Rocks From The Tomb
The Day The Earth Met The Rocket From The Tomb
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Inland (Ataska)
Riq
Sunk-Break (Ward)
Neil Michael Magarity
Play That Good Old Rock And Roll (Dog City)
Chicago Underground Duo
Axe And Algren (Thell Jockey)
The Seesawing Band
Artistic Additives (Theghem) (Conserve)

Compiled by Barry Hagan. All Tomorrow's Parties, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk (see Chat) (There)

Compiled by Ben & Neil. KindaMuzik Netline, www.kindamuzik.netline

Compiled by Bob Bert. BBTGune, www.bbtgune.org

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, readers, etc. Email editor@hewlett.co.uk

All channels open: Sleazeb's mass media (see Inside/Outside, page 22)

SOFT KEYS

SPACE
PARAMETER
CURSOR
WRITE
EXIT
UTILITY
EFFECT
ON/OFF
POWER

DEBBS
PR

100% COMPRESSOR PUMP/PEAK DUAL CHANNEL COMPRESSOR LIMITER WITH GATE

CHANNEL A

100% COMPRESSOR PUMP/PEAK DUAL CHANNEL COMPRESSOR LIMITER WITH GATE

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PHOTO: JEREMY POLLOCK

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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, albums and singles



American magus: John Zorn

JOHN ZORN SONGS FROM THE HERMETIC THEATRE

TAZAK 127009 CD

JOHN ZORN FILMWORKS X: IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN

TAZAK 127333 CD

How to explain CDs to a dead hare? Music is an art of illusion and transformation, the creation of subjective mental images and sensory impressions through operations that are largely intangible and, to some degree, mysterious to both perceiver and activator. For his latest releases, John Zorn has created works of great diversity and varied technical means, lenses of speculation through which are viewed three 20th century virtuosos in the shamanic art of transformation: film maker, dancer and author Maya Deren, film maker, painter and collector Harry Smith, and artist and educator Joseph Beuys. To borrow the words of Joseph Campbell, these were artists "full of gods".

In one respect, the currency of these three figures has become marginalised within the god-empty context of global shopping 'culture', from another viewpoint, their potency continues to accumulate for those who value the history and continuity of independent, inspirational thought. Smith and Deren are firmly sited in the crucible of downtown New York, a magical locus that Zorn himself continues to perpetuate. "Millennia of human diversity and invention seems to have been swiped here," anthropologist James Clifford wrote of New York, "remnants and broken shards, good to evoke in escapist reveries, good to collect as art (or antiquities), and 'good to think with' in salvaging the cultural structures of a transhistorical spirit human."

Through their transformation of the everyday, Deren, Smith and Beuys posted a different kind of life, beyond and outside the bureaucratic 'rationalism' of capital. As written in the sleevenotes for *Songs From The Hermetic Theatre*, Zorn "learned alchemical synthesis from Harry Smith, structural ontology from Richard Foreman, how to make art out of garbage from Jack Smith, cathartic expression at Slugs and hermetic intuition from Joseph Cornell." One might

describe this particular album, largely a solo, as a 'departure': there is a track of electronic music, a track of computer music, a track of speech and sound, a track borrowed from many (extraordinary devices and substances (honey, wax, felt, fat, blood, carcass of a hare, newspaper, towel, \$82 in cash, rubber ball, 78rpm records and phonograph, toy megaphone and so on), some of which could have been transformed by Beuys in alchemical performance pieces such as *How To Explain Pictures To A Dead Hare*. The 78rpm records and phonograph might have been used by Smith, of course, in his curatorial journeys among the once and forever dispossessed of American music.

But these are not departures so much as a flickering movement between source materials (origins) and mature expression, the multiple reflections of two facing mirrors. Concerning reality, Joseph Beuys once asked: "Is it the limited materialist understanding of matter, or is it substance? Substance for me is the greater issue and includes evolutionary power which leads ultimately to the real meaning of Matter." This is the consistent way in which Zorn has worked with sound: not a matter of genres, styles, fashions, poses, tribalism or career moves (though such ephemera affect us all) but a constant search to understand Matter in its relation to time and human behaviour. Small audible traces of activity (some people still demand distinctions between noise, sound and music, all these years after John Cage) move through a map of time in BeuysBlock, the enigma of their deliberation, their placement, sharpened by the high noon shadow of Jennifer Choi's strings. In *The Very Eye Of Night*, (almost) the title of Deren's last completed film before her too-young death, becomes through Zorn the nexus of her voice and his audio-fragmentary, bass drum resonance, rough grain electric bass clanging at loudspeaker cones, creaking cobweb frequencies, loud and air. Deren speaks of time and women, constant metamorphoses, one image becoming another, the importance in her films of what is happening rather than what is. Both electronic pieces, *American Magus* and *The Nerve Key*, seem preoccupied with this sense of becoming. Their tumble and spit is an unravelling of boundless energy that mirrors the perpetually transforming images of Harry

John Zorn's mercurial electronic and acoustic compositions unlock the secret worlds of three 20th century shamanic artists. By David Toop

Smith's animated films, the wheeling Shao-lin sword of Deren's *Meditation On Violence*.

Zorn composed the 15 pieces collected on *In The Mirror Of Maya Deren* as contributions to a documentary film of Deren's life and work, directed by Martine Kudlicki. With so much music already available, both from Deren's husband, composer Teiji Ito, and from her late 1940s recordings of Haitian Vodou rituals, Zorn's score aims to give emotional coherence to the complexity of her story. There are sombre pieces that evoke her Jewish roots in Kiev, where she lived until 1922; playful allusions to Balinese gamelan and dance (an interest she shared with anthropologist Gregory Bateson); the trance drum patterns of Haitian Vodou and the World Music synthesis so engagingly and unpretentiously constructed by Ito.

The compositions are played with wonderful clarity and simplicity of feeling by cellist Erik Friedlander, keyboard player Jamie Saff and percussionist Cyro Baptiste. Zorn plays perussion and piano on some tracks. Just one chord at the centre of a skittering percussion exchange is enough, on the ghostly "Mirror Worlds", to recall the spirit of Ito's little symphonies, the music he recorded for *The Very Eye Of Night* and *Mesches Of The Afternoon*. I particularly like Zorn's unaffected, tender piano playing on the three versions of "Drifting". Suggestions of Deren as a fervent dreamer arise in these three short pieces, a woman we can only imagine from the haunted, yearning beauty of expression captured in photographic portraits and film frames.

More than once, I also hear a faint echo of Don Cherry, another exalted wanderer who searched for universality among the dispersed shards of global humanity. All of these histories accumulated around the lives of Deren, Ito, Smith and Beuys are as fragmentary and elusive as the work itself. Zorn appears to be confronting the imbalance between their humble stature within the suspect pantheon of artistic reputation and their continuing significance to issues of real importance. Seemingly lost in the rushing noise of information, like moments in a dream, they are pulled back into consciousness by another dreamer, made 'good to think with' once again. □

ALÉMU AGA
ETHIOPIQUES 11: THE HARP
OF KING DAVID

BUDA MUSIC/DIG 93232 CD

VARIOUS
ETHIOPIQUES 10: TEZETA
BUDA MUSIC/DIG 93232 CD

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Most of the previous editions in the groundbreaking Ethiopiques series have concentrated on the funkier sounds of "Swinging Addis," the Ethio Jazz of Muktu Astafet, the unreconstructed blackplatozan atmospheres of Mahmoud Ahmed and Hiyat Hiyat, and so on. The latest volumes, however, move on to the true heart of Ethiopian music: the blues. Not the blues as many know it, but the kind of exquisite heartbreak familiar from rembetika, fado, the darkest lullaby or the misty foreboding ghazal. "Tezeta" literally means "memory" and "nostalgia," but in the hands of the artists collected on Ethiopiques 10, this song form and musical mode is no wistful ode to halcyon days gone by, instead, it's lyrical, full of an impossible loss and a melancholy bordering on morbidity. The lyrics are largely along the lines of, "Last night I went to your house/I left my heart and came away only with my lungs/I went where you were in your courtyard, to thrill at least under your footsteps" (from Mulajem Mikiel's ravaged "Hiddeen Alu"). But you don't have to read the lyric sheet to understand this magnificently bleak music: The voices are haunted, wrecked, wrecked by guilt and unrequited love, the tempos and arrangements aren't too dissimilar from certain sadomas, shuffling down dusty ridges, but with an advanced-jazz sax replacing tender strings and drums. Numb rhapsodies will undoubtedly capture the lumbering pace or the basic rhythms. Compared to the African-american traditions from which these records were derived, this is certainly true, but such remarks miss the point. If you want to wail that man right out of your heart, put on a Bava face and peek away the pain, listen to fathi Eneke. And if you want to wallow in despair in your seven rooms of gloom, ditch the Nick Drake and get this on instead.

Of course, the strident agony of *Tezeta* might swing a bit too much for you. If a taste of barbarities and a stack of Robert Peter Williams records is your idea of a party, go straight to Ethiopiques 11. Alému Aga plays the beguina ("King Owida Hag"), an enormous ten-string lyre made of wood and sheep's gut that works along the same principle as the Indian tarbusha and, according to legend, dates back 3000 years. The string-slucking sounds a bit like a West African kora, but after too much kora, not the vibrato drone is akin to playing a rubber band across a cake tin as an underwriter strums the instrument is closely linked to Ethiopia's Catholic orthodoxy and Agéa whisper chants Old Testament fables and poems of devotion to God like a stagnant pond at dusk, this is awesomely still meditative and tranquil, but also dark and unfathomable.

AGNEL/MARCHETTI/
NOETINGER
ROUGE GRIS BRUIT
RECHERCHES
BY LOUISE GRAY

"The backdrop of amplification between rumbles and sizzles is a moment of 'anxiety,'" begins Brandon LaBelle's short sleeve essay

accompanying this album of improvisations conducted by electroacoustic players Lionel Marchetti and Jérôme Noetinger, and pianist Sophie Agnel. The confrontation set up here is between action and reaction, mediated by the response between Agnel's acoustic piano and the other pair's various amplifications. As such, the three constituent parts of *Rouge Gris Bruit* provide each other a continual interpretative challenge. It opens with delicate pulses on wires — almost a chromatic drive; shortwave radio sounds skitter across what is, at first, a great, yawning landscape.

Does it matter if you don't know who or what initiates each section? Listening without recourse to either sleeve or CD display, it's impossible to make clear distinctions between "Matin," "Après-Midi" and "Épilogue." Instead, you sense a sudden acceleration as Agnel's piano strings yield some high tempo notes, or, at later stages, a thick swarm of sound that's effectively a study in harmonics. This isn't to say that *Rouge Gris Bruit* lacks a logic of its own, which functions best when you step outside the realm of willful interpretation. Then the background scripples and far-off scream of "Après-Midi" congeal into a most effective soundtrack for an unnamed internal horror. A series of really discouraging events unfold within clouds of electronic sound and half-audible utterances. This series is the medium through which the two transfer the moments of anxiety inherent in improvisation practice to their listeners.

BEATLESS
LIFE MIRRORS
LIBERTY/UNROCK CD

BY JOHN WELDON

West London beatmakers Paul Martin and Alex Abbas also Beatless attempt to create a light and 'soulful' rhythmic bliss by fusing broken beats, HiPop and World Music. Much like Automator's Lounge project, they mellow dancefloor rhythms with a range of sparse and low vocals and flicked, warm, organic instrumentation. Future abstract soul they call this *beho moshim*, and it requires a couple of stellar vocalists to lift it out of the post-happy mix.

The standout vocal, an unknown Colonel Red, makes an immediate impact with an impassioned falsetto somewhere between Horace Andy and Marvin Gaye. From "No-We'll" comes to the Native American-flavored "No-We'll" to spiritual wanderings on "Like Sugar Like Iren," his elegant vocals gently combine smoochy exuberance with a more immediate angelic-style. Mutating Citi's Rankin's ubiquitous "six million ways to die" phrase into a soulful "There are six million ways you can fly" chorus on "The Truth," he then stretches it out dramatically over an early man funk break.

The impossibly hyperactive Quasimoto, the sick-talking anti-age of underground legend Madlib (The Loophole, Yesterday's New Quarter), and Madlib himself goose two tracks — a delightful diversion from all the ledgled spontaneity. "Rock On" features the schizophrenic duo matching two-step, dance-heavy syncopation perfectly as they expose the transcendence of everyday banality. On "Dominate," Madlib musically lockdown beats while Quasimoto spits, "We keep a secret in our couch 'til we see the prominent/Suicide can't catch it, cause we be the dominant" over another sinister beat.

Following a nostalgic trend in the world of looped grooves, from Lovin's lounge to Outkast's funk to Madlib's jazz encroaching, Beatless's soul fuses a sense of lost musical delight with London's stellar studio techniques. It is so floaty, ethereal threatening to drift off into the ether, though, that however exquisitely complex the beats, both real and programmed, they need a Madlib/Quasimoto punch to bring them back down to earth.

LYLE BRUCKMANN
AND
MUSICA GENUINA
MG001 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

Apart from the attention of a few notable exceptions (Jagjagz Leijer, Sonny Simmons) the obse and our angles have never quite established themselves as legit jazz instruments (unless the clavier, which rode into the emerging world of American popular music on the wave of early 20th century Eastern European immigration and New Orleans' translation of the French classical tradition into Creole jazz), while in the domain of contemporary classical music the obse has retained a strong presence, thanks in no small part to the virtuosity of Heinz Holliger, as both performer and composer. In the light of recent developments in obse technique called for by younger composers, many of whom are writing with Holliger in mind, it's clear the instrument is perfectly suited to the demands of today's improved music. In the hands of a great player, it's as agile as any clavier, and just as capable of multifarious and extended techniques as the saxophone. On the strength of his second album, followed by the solo debut *Centropiano* on Bony, Austable a couple of years back, Chicago-based Lyle Bruckmann is up to the task.

And is a collection of discs pitting his obse, cut again (a Chinese double-reed instrument) and rats against the steam of Chicago improvisers' precursors: Michael Zerang and Weissel Walter, bass clarinetists Gene Coleman and Scott Rosenberg, trombonist Jai Bishop, oboist Fred Lonberg Holm and Jim Baker on synthesizer. Where Bruckmann's first album showcased his virtuoso playing, And reveals he's just as capable of virtuoso listening. He can take on Zerang and Bishop in the outer reaches of instrumental technique, craft beautiful and coherent melodic lines with the clavierists, but multitudes defer to him as clearly as John Butcher, and if need be slow the hell out of the upper register — quite a feat on a double-reed instrument — to produce a screaming high end. All this before going the distance with the ubiquitous Weissel Walter in a final round worthy of Peter Brötzmann.

BERTRAND BURGALAT
THE SSSOUND OF MUSMUSIC
DISQUES TRICAT/ TRICATELA COLUP

BY LOUISE GRAY

As the title says, the *Sssound Of Musmusic* is designed for seduction. But the disc doesn't follow the straightforward trajectory the word seduction often assumes. Look at the sleeve pictures — young men reclines on sand, floats about in the sea, sits beneath an implausibly blue beach umbrella — and for an instant, a stream of seductive, incandescent heat's Café de Mar, chloof chloof, lays music for indulgent, evidence. Well, the latest album from Corsica's

Bertrand Burgalat, whose arranger credits include work with Bill Fissardier's ex-wife Ingrid Cawet, Labèque, Mark Harvey and Eriq-Ernestine Neubaum, might indeed be played beneath implausibly blue beach umbrellas, but no conclusions should be drawn from that.

The *Sssound Of Musmusic*'s laudable textures, breathy vocals and subdued beats lure the listener into a certain relaxation, while the implausible Latin beats and little dubbed at the extent of Burgalat's role as a master seducer let the album leads you places that you can't anticipate with any clarity.

As one would expect from a musician with Burgalat's CV, his presence isn't straightforward. The odd intervals on, say, "Ma Ressource," or the more subtle suggestion of "C'est impossible" offer enough hints that his vision is hardly mainstream. His shifting sense of strings are far from complacent. At a stretch you could say that he plays with the disposable nature of lounge music. But if you don't think about it, you'll wake up to discover you're been seduced and abandoned.

THE NELS CLINE SINGERS
INSTRUMENTALS
CRYPTOGRAMMOPHON CD 13 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Nels Cline has been rightly described as one of the most versatile, imaginative and criminally unheralded guitarists working today. In the late 1970s he played in the chamber jazz group Quinter Music with his brother Alex, and has since steered an individual course across the boundaries of free jazz, avant rock and noise. Recent collaborations include percussionist Gregg Bendure, Vinny Golio and Thurston Moore, and he's worked in duo formats with Zeena Parkins and painter Norio Wadano. Instrumentals is a superb album. Maybe it was a mistake to read Nels Cline's own jargonistic, witty and informative press release about it, because I find myself agreeing with just about everything he says in its defense. The group's name is a way reference to Eds. Easy Listening vocal groups, but the Singers are an instrumental trio along the lines of his earlier outfit. "Innervately called the Nels Cline Trio" (probably a way reference to jazz-literate folks). Cline's various singing groups, Devin Hoff's bass and Scott Amendola's drums make for a three-way dialogue of separate and equal voices.

Amendola's stunning ferocity and growls are, it says here, "suggested by his raw electronic madness," and if there's madness in the general exuberance there's also clear method in it. The range of styles the group encompasses across a 75-minute CD is remarkable: from Ornette Coleman-style freedom on "A Mug Like Mine" through the wailing blues "Lowered Blood" to the rolling, one-third power play of "Cause For Concern." Cline claims the Singers are his first truly low-wattage unit. If you live in the US, look out for them in your hometown, otherwise you may need to indulge some very worthwhile nonadic devices of your own.

LOL COXHILL
SPECTRAL SOPRANO
EMANEM K014 CD

BY OLIVIE BIGILL

This magnificent release is a carefully composed two CD retrospective of the career of one of

SOUL CENTER

III

NDWMUTE NDMJ64 CD

In the beginning there was rhythm. That's a no-brainer. But Cologne's Thomas Brinkmann, on the third installment of his Soul Center project, is interested in a different kind of history of dance music. He announces it in the epigraph to the album, in a quote from George Clinton — "12 inches before there were 12 inches" — that serves as the lead-in to an hour of chugging funk. Huh? The way the Clinton quotation has been truncated, it takes on a different meaning. Here, it's no longer about a particular kind of record (we can guess that Clinton was talking about dance records before they were codified as "extended play" singles), but in a word spatial/temporal flip-flop, it seems to be focusing on the stretch of recorded music right before the vinyl big bang created the dance universe as we know it: in a shower of 12" white labels and an explosion of genres that spun off into their own little solar systems.

In other words, once upon a time, when the beats moved at a crawl and the world didn't spin at 130 bpm, there was soul. Brinkmann is certainly no retro act, but he grew up on soul music in clubs where people danced close, and he's not afraid to be nostalgic. Soul Center, he says, is close to the spirit he thinks is missing today, a kind of grooveiness that's been lost in a dance culture "that's become a little too much like sport." Appropriately, the project is named for a club Brinkmann frequented in the 70s, a disco from the years before disco that played American R&B to a crowd composed largely of African GIs stationed in Germany.

Brinkmann appeared in the late 1990s as one of Techno's most extreme minimalists, creating patterns carved out of vinyl with a knife, with a tonal range restricted to the barest muted thumps and clicks. On releases for his own max Ernst label and the philosophically inclined Supposé, he explored the limits of the loop. But in 1999, on his first record released as Soul Center, he repopulated his austere grooves with sounds of a very different origin, with grunts and yelps and bluesy ornaments lifted from Motown's back catalogue: a sonic portrait of pure, disembodied expression straining at the limits of its container. Working with samples from Slick records, the second Soul Center LP focused on the loop in the context of Afro-American call and response, looking ones like "Can I ask you something?" and "Ain't I clean?" into endless cycles. These looped calls were designed to provoke the same response from the dancing crowd. They were grinning, visceral records aimed at short-circuiting the clean, effortless machinery of mass-produced dance music.

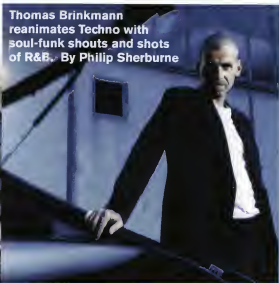
It is a natural continuation of the Soul Center project. The shouts are still there, but they're more restrained, keeping to a few spoken word fragments mostly snipped from the funk canon — "How far do you wanna go?", "I know/I know/I know/I know," the schizo cry "I don't know what this world is," — Brinkmann locks them into a loop vortex that sucks out all their meaning. What's said matters less than the act of repeating it. Brinkmann has expressed fascination with the hidden messages of African American culture and the alternative forms of signifying developed under oppression. His use of looped vocals suggests an effort to read between the lines.

The major break from the first two Soul Center records, though, is *it's* almost complete absence of samples. Not that you immediately notice it. Brinkmann culls some of his percussion sounds, ragged snares and hand drums from old records, thereby maintaining the rawness of the first two Soul Center albums. But the jaunty organ riffs, the bushy-tailed vibes, the hyperactive slap bass are all Brinkmann and his machines. "A lot of people thought I took this and this and this," says Brinkmann, "but nobody could name the sources — and in fact it was not possible to name them because I made them up." On Soul Center records, then, the "sampling" factor is simply a process of cultural quotation. What distinguishes Soul Center from the retro simulacra of, say, White Stripes' take on Detroit blues rock or The Poets Of Rhythm's immaculately counterfeited funk 45s, is the way Brinkmann folds his quotations into the fabric of German dub Techno. It's a method made familiar from a generation of labels like Profan and Basic Channel, where a set of variations is based entirely on filling in the spaces around a regular kickdrum and its answering hi-hat. Trump-thump meets chicky-boom uptown.

German music has long held a fascination with the culture of the Black Atlantic — after all, Techno comes from black Detroit and is heavily invested in dub. Brinkmann's bastardised music comes a newfound subversion, however subtle, in those parts of Europe where nationalist factions stir up anti-foreigner feelings over issues of immigration and national identity. "I don't know what this world is" is no longer just a funky sample. In its truncated anguish, it carries the shouts of outsiders and the silence forced upon them.

Trump thump meets chicky-boom uptown: Thomas Brinkmann

Thomas Brinkmann
reanimates Techno with
soul-funk shouts and shots
of R&B. By Philip Sherburne



London's best-loved musicians. Lol Coxhill is old enough to have seen National Service at Air Force ("The best thing was seeing the John Denkerfort Seven in a congealed iron danc hall in Ipswich"), and young enough to join electronics wizard Nick LaPuma for an LMC live Internet linkup with Anselm. His willingness to enter wholeheartedly into this is not of project, alongside musings young enough to be his grandchildren, is one of his noted characteristics. Another is his on-stage humor — his timing and deadpanning are the equal of many full-time comics. The audience audibly eats out of his hand as he sings "Sweet Hawaiian Kisses" with Steve Bassford and Tony Cox in the two known as The Mighty Four Yet comedy can be a million rind a musician's risk, and Coxhill displays it only when he sees fit. In 1982 he wrote a spoof interview for *Rolling Stone* magazine: "I saw you [Dick Riley]!" Complains Tony Cox they had at least one comic saxophone player: "I don't do anything funny." "Come on, man, those boots, broke me up." "What broke me up the most on this album was 'Murder In The Air,' Coxhill's rendition of all the voices in a 1920s (serious) play about a suspicious flying accident. Expertly chaotic accompaniment comes from Venerable Weston and Rick Rose. Then there's the voice: Coxhill's high tenor is a surprisingly tender instrument. He ounces hilariously inapposite sincerity on Gershwin's "Embraceable You", then segues into the full-blooded sax and piano torrent of Charlie Parker's "Quasimodo". On one of the most bizarre tracks, he transforms "Upturn Top Ranking" into perry reggae sleaze — or is that what it was all along?

DJ, and the saxophone. Always loquacious, squawking phrases away, a curious tone full of cat-theatering candor. Here we see him telescoped from the rich, warm jazz tenor of "Needles" at the Hag Pole, Aylesbury (1954), via the soprano and echo unit alongside Steve Miller's Wuritzer piano (very 1973), to the 1990s electronic landscapes of Paul Schütze, and the "concerto" with the London Improvisers Orchestra. Many a jazzist would have stayed with Pop and never been playing it today, but Coxhill has opted for a carry-on mindlessness about genre, embracing the mix of spontaneity. In his words, "My major involvements remain with musical 'off-languing,' though I retain my interest in other more restricted musical forms."

Finally, I love this album for the way you can hear an alternative history of musical London in the background. The 60s R&B of Tony Knight's

Chesmen, The Damned's Lu Edmonds at Berry's Bar in Sowerby, sound poet Bob Cobbing's bellowing bass at Solly D'Brien's in Peckham, the sound of drummer Steve Noble's basement. Live atmosphere enforces many of these recordings like urban lichen. I realize I feel a kind of patriotism about Lol Coxhill, a stronger emotional attachment than to the Queen.

HUGH DAVIES WARMING UP WITH THE ICEMAN CRASH BOX CD BY TOM PIERCE-HARD

Hugh Davies's homemade instruments — he calls them "chocys" — are the rule. Goldberg-like contraptions, with things like springs, saw blades and wire are screwed onto wooden bases and amplified with contact microphones. In the mid-1940s, Davies assisted and played with Stockhausen for the German composer's *Microphone 3*, a piece scored with a mixture of graphic and traditional notation, and one that uses as its sound source an amplified ten-man played with household objects. That experience may have shaped Davies's subsequent music, as such sound sources and conceptual methods are similar to his own; but the music here has an entirely individual identity and character.

Although each of the seven compositions employs a different choxy, the sheer novelty of an instrument's sound or the way it's played is never Davies's concern. His real strength is a more or less conventional and highly developed musicality. Whereas someone like Adam Bollen might use amplified objects to liberate sound from its traditional instrumental contexts, the expressive phrasing and sense of drama in Davies's playing scarcely suggests his work with a European instrumental tradition — known to the long crescendo and quick, lunging movements that he uses to build the wistful opening section of "Lunar Day". His sense of form and narrative is sure throughout. At 19 minutes, "Shorzy Sequence No 3" is by far the longest piece on the CD, but its clearly audibly structured contrasts with an extreme complexity of sound to produce an entirely satisfying whole.

To demonstrate the versatility of his choxy, Davies recorded two versions of "Music For A Single String". The one closing the album is perhaps the best track: extremely violent, yet melodic; in Davies's hands the string has a range of sounds that exceeds that of many traditional, "billed" instruments. The same could

be said for the percussive, most recent of his constructions, here given its own five minute piece. This choxy is a little circuit board that's soaked with feathers and brushes to produce the sort of sound Henric might have made if he had played the mbira.

DISKALISHES ANONYMOUS TRIO DISKALISHES ANONYMOUS TRIO CRASH BOX CD BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

After the propitiously blurt of noise and confusion that introduces the towering presence, and momentarily challenged reputations, of Mark Gustafson, Jim O'Rourke and Thurston Moore, aka Diskalishes Anonymous Inc., this live recording from Kallisto 2000 in Sweden takes on an altogether more interesting slant, allowing all three players to demonstrate their free improvis credentials to the full.

O'Rourke is an synthesizer and computer for a disc. To his great credit, he manages to control his partners' excesses and release their natural ability to pursue the moment without being too deluged. Thurston Moore is at the best when he engages his instrument not only as a guitar, but as a piece of percussion. His unique voice is best heard uncluttered by massive thrash overtones. Delicately picking the strings and allowing both their sound and their texture to be released, he sells a mood of concentration and focus on detail. O'Rourke instinctively responds with walled sounds and aspects of signal generation. Gustafson finally reacts to the deluge with beauty and dense, long bass tones (presumably from the tuba) that form the perfect earthy counterpart to Moore's fast steel vibrations, while O'Rourke meeps into the quiet some washes that naturally give it all together.

These improvisations are a triumph of will over expectation (not a guaranteed outcome of meetings of such minds in a "supergroup" scenario). The trio allow pieces to grow with measured relaxation, the most scepticist neither than noncommittal. This does not preclude intensity and attention to detail — the concentration level is always high and audibly tangible. On "Totally Gum (Gump Complicity)", the middle of three long improvisations, the two are fully integrated and spontaneous. Moore also produces a wonderful improvisation on "Hollow Label Silence", all-faced, grayer and sharper sharpness, answered by a low end

rumble from Gustafson that finally builds in intensity to a high gear climax. At its end, any initial confusion has resolved itself into clarity.

DO MAKE SAY THINK & YET & YET CONSISTENT CRASH 9999 CD BY PHIL ENGLAND

Although they are frequently lumped in the same bag, the only connection between Do Make Say Think have to Moritz's Godspeed You! Black Emperor is a shared record label. They have neither the intrigue of Godspeed's confused political yearnings nor the manipulative poignancy of emotional angst of their rock syncretic poisons to negotiate.

DMST are much more compact and unassuming. Their lastback instrumentals are musically contrived with early Torontonian basslines, sharp, clear, tunably propulsive drumming and overblown melodic guitar convey a shared sense of loss before an unexpected change gives a lift to the spirit. On "End Of Music", a static synth-drenched space rock excursion suddenly reaches escape velocity and explodes into a double-acted flight of the soul. And the steadily bulking repetition of "Reckless" breaks down to a single bassline, then a lone trumpet, which is soon overblended in a lush arrangement, as if a shaft of light has just come through the studio window.

Although the bulk of the structural work is carried out by the bass, two drums (the doubling up is very audible) and guitar, the keyboards provide textural nuances throughout. Only on "Sold And Drunk" do the drums sound a little busy; otherwise you wouldn't know or care that this was recorded at guitarist Justin's house (their previous album was recorded in a barn), and a deeper listen reveals the ample cave that's gone into the mix. Warm and comforting to have around, a diverting distraction. The End of Music? Now there's an idea.

JEWELIA EISENBERG TRILECTIC T240H 127168 CD BY JULIAN GOWLEY

Relectic is an album to file between Meredith Monk and Sweet Honey In The Rock. That's some space to occupy. But New Yorker Jewlia Eisenberg, now based in Oakland, California, covers a lot of stylistic ground. Flouting the a cappella orthodoxy of Charming Hordes in a dazzling display of vocal agility, wit, emotional flexibility



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SCD 100 **DO MAKE SAY THINK** & YET & YET
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Bleddyn Butcher
retraces the jet
trails blazed by
the legendary
Cleveland group
that gave birth to
Pere Ubu



Skeleton crew: Rocket From The Tombs

ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS
THE DAY THE EARTH MET THE ROCKET
FROM THE TOMBS

HEARNS/SLITTERHOUSE GROSS/40 CD

This is a genuine blast from the past, in impact as well as in name. Although Rocket From The Tombs are mainly remembered as a Pere Ubu prototype, the group don't sound remotely tentative: confident, yes; as experimental as machief, and occasionally, rough as guts. But never tentative. The Tombs' takes on early Ubu achievements like "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" and "Final Solution", here given their first official release, roar forth from the speakers fully realised. When this group were firing, they achieved sonic distinction, a searing, high octave magnificence. Blazing amazing trails, they deserve to be celebrated, not consigned to a historical footnote.

It would be a mistake, however, to give the impression that the group sprang from the godfired fully formed. They sprang, far more prosaically, from Cleveland, Ohio, "city of light, city of magic" on the shores of Lake Erie, and their lifespan was brief. Formed in a spirit of reckless experiment by David Thomas, in mid-1974, they achieved critical mass with the addition of Peter Laughner, Gene O'Connor and Craig Bell six months later, and collapsed amid rencore in August 1975. Drawn from three separate performances in 1975, this collection reveals their sources even as the group transcend them. It is bookended afrothought, as many of their sets were, by The Stooges' "Raw Power" and "Search And Destroy" and pays formal tribute to The Velvet Underground twice: first with a cover of "Foggy Notion" and then with "Amphetamine", so named because of its musical debt to that other dubious pharmaceutical hymn, "Heroin". Other ur-punk influences are also apparent. Traces of The Kinks, Blue Cheer, David

Bowie and Captain Beefheart linger and year like queisserone ghosts but can't dim the glory of The Rockets' own howling, squalling cacophony.

It's hard to believe that music this vital is only now receiving official release. Most of the original songs here were eventually rerecorded by one or other of the principals: they would fail, in every instance, to match the brilliance of these prototypes. Even the eerie, post-apocalyptic "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" released by the first Pere Ubu line-up can't compare to the bombing raid re-enacted here.

"30 Seconds" is drawn from the first of the disc's three sessions, recorded for radio broadcast at the group's rehearsal space on 18 February 1975. Nine of the 12 tracks laid down that day are included here. They are quite simply stunning. Both "What Love Is" and "Ain't It Fun" were co-written by O'Connor and recorded by The Dead Boys, the group he went on to form with drummer John Macdonald and sometime Tombs vocalist, Stiv Bators, after he changed his name to Cheatah Chrome. He might have spared The Dead Boys the bother: there's no room for improvement on either track.

The nihilism of Peter Laughner's reading of "Ain't It Fun" is devastating. You don't need to know cowriter Laughner's fate - in thrall to the rock 'n' roll myth of wasted romanticism, he died of pancreatitis in 1977 - to be chilled by a line like "Ain't it fun when you know you're going to die young?" You might register the bravado but what you really hear is what's denied: vicious, cursing regret. Laughner's choked, stinging guitar lines belie his loathe lyrics, acute and moving as any blues. In the instrumental section, his flailing solo is bured, perversely, beneath O'Connor's bludgeoning rhythm guitar. Self-loathing is abundantly evident. What's surprising is its clear-sighted statement, its wrenching eloquence. This track alone

justifies the entire release.

Laughner's guitar plays a fluid, sculptural role throughout this first session. His command is thrillingly articulate, creating context, establishing atmosphere, giving chaos shape. It's a breathtaking display. He takes a less prominent role on the subsequent sessions, performance recordings from summer 1975. Both have a muddier sound, partially, at least, by design. The group have changed tactics, promoting noise to first principle. The guitars no longer sound wry or satiric - they claw at one another, like cats in a cavernous bag. The bass thuds urgently. Drums clutter and bash, batter and clash. Nothing sounds finished or settled, everything's churned into mud. And yet at the heart of this maelstrom, there's something missing: a gathering absence, a palpable void - as if all the sound and the fury was simply a way of making space to hear things differently.

It works. "Final Solution", sung by Laughner, sounds like "Summertime Blues" put together from scraps by primitives. (And in a way, it is.) "Seventeen" somehow contrives to deconstruct punk - before it ever happened, of course. Both are from a show supporting Television at Cleveland's Poccidilly Inn in July, during which Thomas curiously passed no audible remarks. The three songs from the Agora in May are something different again. Thomas is hugely present and hugely impatient. "Frustration" concludes its hectic business (cheering the carset) in just over two minutes. "Down In Flames" falls completely to pieces in less, hastily recombining as a breakneck "Search And Destroy". Two years later, similar cage-rattling antics became epidemic. Rocket From The Tombs were pushing the envelope. Within weeks of the Television support slot, they'd rattled their own ship to bits. This release traces their starburst trajectory and presents that explosive moment as history. □

and imaginative depth. She opens with "Mi Dimandats", a traditional Sephardic song dressed in Bulgarian harmonies. Further traditional material and some klezmerish love songs close the set. Between lies the multilingual "Telcote Suts", inspired by a complicated relationship between German-Jewish cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and Latvian communist theatre director and actor Asja Lācis (1891-1979). Kabbalistic scholar Gershom Scholem also figures in the drama.

The suite is a wonderfully versatile celebration of voice. Some passages are appropriately semiotic of Degma Krause warbling passionately in the Arcades, but little is really predictable in Eisenberg's treatment of her intriguing subject. Her highly disciplined investigation of the rhythmic potential of breath and body sounds feels Meredith Monk's ensemble work. As well as Jewish and Eastern European elements there are allusions to Pygmy chants, work songs, finely judged rock stylizations, deejay and gospel. "Eskimo Suit" is as quickly funny and funky as anything that the great a cappella group The Passengers recorded during their fruitful mid-1990s alliance with avant garde cowpoke Ned Sublette and conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner.

Eisenberg's voice is central to the project but Chaz Nohetz, Niki Friedlander and Dan Rabinson support from Charming Hostess's 1999 CD *Car (Vaccination)*, joined here by Nina Rolle, Nils Anderson and guests. The harmonic richness and rhythmic vitality of their interwoven voices are fleetingly augmented by percussion and bass, but essentially the a cappella arrangements are perfectly self-sufficient, and as enjoyable as they are impressive.

MICHAEL FINNISSY VERDI TRANSCRIPTIONS & PIANO CONCERTOS MIANO MISC000207 CD

BY PHIL CLAIKE

This two CD set of Michael Finnissey's piano music played by Ian Pace documents the composer's extraordinary talent on tradition, in a sense everything Finnissey does is a comment on one tradition or another, but the conceptual clarity behind the Verdi transcriptions makes the work particularly approachable. When he began it in 1972, he envisaged four separate books of music, but by 1986 he had only finished the first book, and nine years later he combined the remaining material into a second. The work was performed in that form by Ian Pace in 1995 during his season of Finnissey concerts at the Conway Hall. But why Verdi?

Finnissey describes being touched by "the energy, passion and wide-ranging generous humanity of Verdi's operas", and his transcriptions transform these qualities into a powerful personal statement. Some pieces link Verdi's foundations away altogether and reassemble them again through the prism of his own piano music, or the compositional alchemy and juxtaposing that Finnissey has borrowed from film. Others graft his embellishments on top of Verdi's original. The nine sections that make up Book One, meanwhile, are cunningly conveyed to form a massive 40 minute structure.

Starting in the dark bowels of the piano, an aria from *Oberto* is restructured so it can have an acid and spiky two-part conversation with

itself. The fifth section (based on a sextet from *Ernani*) represents a contrasting apex of brightness and joy. Verdi's original line poles through scintillating decoration of blinding complexity and Pace's pianistic achievement in keeping both strands alive is quite remarkable. The piece splinters in section six into angry deconstructed clusters and the effect is shattering. After the impact of Book One, the linear structure of Book two makes it feel less convincing but the individual pieces are no less impressive. The work ends with a colossal half hour re-composition of an aria from *Don Carlo* that begins as a decidedly Feldman-like manner before the calm is punctured by rare interruptions that imperceptibly build into ferocious waltzes of descending notes.

In his piano concertos Finnissey adopted ideas from the late 19th century French composer Charles Alkan – the finissey of the way who wrote music of tremendous harmonic and structural complexity and created the illusion of the piano being both soloist and orchestra in his Concerto For Solo Piano. Finnissey's Concerto No 6 (1960-81) starts with a bang, but as a rather clandestine piece that seeps obsessively in the lower register of the instrument and suddenly shoots to high end trills for its conclusion. Pace has described Concerto No 4 as the widest piano piece ever written. Imagine your favourite Cate Taylor solo transcribed and then repeated with the conviction and heat of the source performance. This piece relentlessly reinvents the instrument as an orchestra controlled by a single pair of hands, equipped for which Ian Pace is superbly equipped.

FOG FOG NINA TUNE ZENBO CD BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Fog's Andrew Broder, like his allies in Ambient and cLOUDDEAD, raises the question: what is HipHop, exactly? HipHop is a culture, of course, but the outlines of that culture – originally so strongly situated in particular socioeconomic, ethnic and geographical circumstances – have expanded and blurred in the last decade, as the genre has become increasingly dispersed. Even in its shifting cultural capital, though, HipHop has generally retained a certain stylistic signature: certain kinds of beats, particular lyrical styles. This album, however, references HipHop – it's on Ninja Tune, DonsDre records and Broder talks in interviews about a youth spin DJing and writing graffiti – even as its shores of almost all the traditional signatures, save for the scratching. Well, it's there, sort of, except when Broder talks about it, he's quick to check himself: "I don't know, scratch scratch."

If many a freestyle musician will do anything to wrangle out of committing verbally to a certain genre, no matter how entrenched the music really is, Fog's debut is one of those rare albums that really doesn't belong to any one place. Neither HipHop nor avant garde. Broder's turntable work is a reminder that 'turntablism' isn't the only way of wielding a deck. He wades in the turbulence where those beats converge, and is left standing on his own sandbar when they subside.

Although he claims his moniker comes from a childhood spent in a fog, it's also an apt description of the sound he conjures, thick with

blurred, atonal scorching, fuzzed keys and sloopy acoustic guitars. Many (if not all) of the Country soul with unimportant low-fidelity beats, his bedroom recording draws as much on the back porch as the basement party. "Fuckedupfuckfuck" is the most 'traditional' thing here, with a bass drum so overdone you can feel the paper peaking off the speaker cones, occasional blurred samples and an extended scratch solo. "Truth And Laughing Gas" follows in the same mould, but the growling, despondent drones owe more to Radiohead's dark theatricality.

Fog's also says plenty about the meteorological component of his music. The heavy atmosphere is as consistent as cloud cover, and the shapeshifting form of his ideas is as impossible to describe. The album's chosen single, "Pneumonia", is the only thing here with anything like a melody. "Clockwork" and supposedly mean lyrics, but darned if I can hear anything past the classical guitar fingering, scratched kazoos lead, and a lumbering breakdown. This isn't really the future of HipHop, but as a feeling review on its conficted present, it makes for a fantastic debut.

ERIK FRIEDLANDER GRAINS OF PARADISE TZADIK TZADIK CD BY MATT FYTHCHE

Downstate jazz cellist Erik Friedlander – a regular collaborator with John Zorn, Joe Lovano and Dave Douglas, and who recently teamed up with Bushy Mee's drum machines – now departs for an exotic location described as "Sephardic meadows Belyayev". Released as part of Zaid's Radical Jewish Culture series, *Grains of Paradise* unites Friedlander with Trevor Dunn on bass, Satoshi Takeshi (percussion), Bryce Dessner (guitar) and a trio of violinists (Joey Mannheim, Kamen Mire and Peter Row) whose role is to supply the kind of Middle Eastern panache that has recently been catching Friedlander's ear. And if that isn't clear enough, he's named these compositions after spices.

The feisty opening of "Zahar" – hisping percussive and bass, butt, supple, melodic flourishes of the string section – plunges us immediately into the golden era of Turkish restaurant music. Against the peat, sassy jays of the tune and occasional lightning flash scales of the string section, Friedlander at first winds and weaves his way in the wings until a gap clears on the cellophone, and he is soaring proud and plangent scales, playing a know of arpeggios or momentarily skating off over the strings in a tense and disorienting whop.

Mostly recorded in a cell, the album has a generous, tactile feel. The compositions generally repeat the balance of the rich and sassy rhythmic strings – overblown in places to produce an electric melodic presence – with Friedlander's swooning kismet wheezing and chopping its way into the heart of the melody. More languid tracks bring out Dessner's moose guitar work, and "Tzipa" explores an intimate too with bass and percussion. But the most revealing piece of mystery is reserved for the title track at the end, where Friedlander moves away from the form he's been exploring to create more of a suggestive tone poem here, the cello picks a restrained drip-drop arpeggio, as the violins, for once melodically uncertain, hold more ambivalent

tone clusters, while twinkling points up the sense of otherness with abrasive cymbal scrapes, the clang of an old chime or glittery rattle of a gong.

FRED FRITH & MAYBE MONDAY DIGITAL WILDOUSE WINTER A WINTER WWWW1001 CD

MASSACRE MELTDOWN TZADIK TZADIK CD BY CLIVE BELL

For a week in May 2001, Fred Frith took his Maybe Monday quartet into Gaerula Euphonia studio in Oakland, California, it sounds a curious place, in which Larry Onda (RCA Saxophone Quartet) can sip water at the other three from 50 metres away. Or maybe that's engineer Myles Rosen, himself a famous saxophone player with studio effects. Rosen adds value and momentum to the music with some creative manipulation, a little harmoniser on the sax here, a little delay on Joe Jannacou's cello there, Mya Masakawa's notes and electronics complete the quartet. Although this sounds like a fine in-pro record, repeated listening reveals a more complex story. Sometimes the whole group seem to be fed through a delay to create repetition. Its hard to tell how much of the end result is Rosen's 'real time sound manipulation', how much is Frith the composer reading the music at a later date, and how much was thrashed out live in Oakland. What is clear is that Frith is thinking outside the box, as they say about how music can be made by improvisers, and that the pure, unadorned emotion of what was played in the studio is only one approach.

However, the music's a little hard to engage with. There's a disturbed beauty here, a messiness that often prevents the music glowing. That begs the question of whether music should glow. Does in particular like to blast away at any approaching atmospheric shimmer, his saw a kind of anti-Ambient rap. Frith's guitar is highly imaginative and unpredictable as ever. The five tracks work like sequences of emotional episodes, struggling and sweating their way towards passages of calm. And the closing "Close to Home" says a peaceful feature of plucked strings under Onda's exquisitely fluttering soprano.

Dore month later, Frith was in London for Robert Wyatt's Meltdown Festival, and a reunion of Massacre with Bill Lawell and Charles Hayward. Straight away you notice the big, warm, generous sound conjured up on the Queen Elizabeth Hall stage by long-term Lawell associate Dr Fritz. A few days ago I wrote a fantasy piece about free improvisers in stadiums – "Stadpop" it was called – and here is a fine example, translating the 'best of the period' creativity and fired up group communication of the best improv to the larger arena. Admittedly the QEH is not exactly Wembley, and Massacre are fuelled with the energy of hardcore rock. Whatever, within the first 20 minute track, Lawell's bass has traversed the Richter scale, Hayward's drums are down to a cusp and Frith's guitar is somehow laconic and endlessly inventive at the same time. Chopping up his sound with gobs, he sounds like he's hurling metal plates at Lawell. Later on the same track he tries out a highly-gurdy imitation, then trades that in for a virtuosic soundtrack. Things get

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even hotter on the blissfully riotous "Figure Out", 25 minutes of 'lock, no hands' interaction closing with Hayward's Ambient melodic. Frith has always been a reluctant guitar hero, and his response to being presented with space to stretch out at a big event is a wonder to behold. This is a probing, satisfying set that never preens or sinks into complacency. It's another track release worthy of shelf space alongside Merkit, Derek Bailey's seething funk tetra.

GILES, GILES & FRIPP THE BRONDESBURY TAPES NICKELPLATE: VISION CD BY DAVE MAND

The release of The Brondebury Tapes makes available 70 minutes of genius by the whimsical jazz-pop outfit Giles, Giles & Frupp, legendary predecessors of King Crimson. The surprisingly high quality recordings were produced in 1968 in the group's home studio and, like GG's one official release, *The Cheerful Insanity* Of Giles, Giles & Frupp, they bear virtually no resemblance to the music of King Crimson, whose debut LP was just one year away.

The group's core line-up — Michael Giles on drums and vocals, brother Peter on bass and vocals, and Robert Frupp on guitar — is augmented on more than half the tracks here by multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald (another future Crimson member) and ex-Fairport Convention vocalist Judy Dyble. Her delicate singing fortresses her last collaboration with the folk group Trade Horne, most notably on "I Talk To The Wind" (later reissued by Chess). McDonald adds lead vocals on a couple of tracks, and Frupp on alternate takes of "Digging My Lawn" and "Endless Eyes". Also included on *Brondebury* are a handful of songs co-written by McDonald and future Crimson lyricist Peter Sinfield.

The tracks written by Peter Giles stand out here, including the delightful "Newly Weds" and "Digging My Lawn", both later re-recorded for *Cheerful Insanity*. Frupp's compositions, strangely, are less developed, though his guitar playing — much warmer and jazzier than with Crimson — is already beautifully fluid and stunningly nimble.

It's hard not to like these economic, catchy tunes. Although they had very brief Crimson moments like the spacey free improv section of "Endless Eyes", it's baffling to think that these same people produced in *The Court Of The Crimson King* just months later.

DAVID GRUBBS ACT FIVE, SCENE ONE BLUE CHIPMUNKS ROCK CD BY DOUGLAS WOLK

David Grubbs has always been fond of "repetitions with difference", small and large. Back in his art punk days with Bastro, he included two versions of the same song on an album, and called it "Recidivist". *Act Five, Scene One* is a Grounding Day of a piece: four 15 minute sections, all constructed on the same template. Each one starts with Grubbs singing a brief guitar collage as if it were an executive's stress toy. He then varies its theme a few times with additional instrumentation, then casually recedes into near total inaction with occasional flutterings of activity wandering through the stereo field — distant can, laptop beats, uncertain ringing notes, digital distortion. Just when you've stopped paying attention, the cycle

begins again, and a synth buzz at the end of the disc loops around to the beginning.

Grubbs calls this "a noise-bar rock 'n' roll". Well, "noise-bar" nails it nicely, but the 'rock 'n' roll' bit is pushing it. Even when he's playing distorted guitar along with Dan Brown's clasp drums at the beginning of the first section, he legs rhythmically behind the beat, and by the time he does it again in the fourth, the piece's languid inertia is so well established that it can't pick up much momentum. Grubbs is best when he plays against a foil, and the liveless passages of *Act Five* actually come from his frequent collaborator Tony Conrad. Sensing the spotlight is empty at the end of the first section, Conrad jumps in for a few minutes of sour violin scraping. Later, his solo turn recurs, co-opted into the endlessly repeating quarter-hour's inertia by Grubbs's patiently repetitive fingerpicking. There's a certain irony to this album, as with much of his recent work, but it's dryly witty, too.

THE HERBALISER SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES NINJA TUNE ZENOCORP CD BY MOSI REEVES

The title track of *The Herbaliser's* third album showcases the singer bawling Seamus to, who wraps her voice around Iva Wherry's and Ollie Teebe's languorous arrangements. Their interplay builds to a dramatic crescendo, as *The Easy Access Orchestra* add a trumpet to underline their moves. Beautiful and intoxicating, it's the highlight of the album. The next track, a quirky piece titled "Vertical Artery", makes for a startling contrast, no matter how assured *Dilated Peoples'* Incanse sounds rapping over it. Sadly, "Something Wicked This Way Comes" turns out to be an anomaly, as *Herbaliser* settles into familiar UK rap territory, even if they do chum out beats that are slightly more musical than their American counterparts. On "Time 2 Build", a snaky bassline hides underneath the chopped disco sample. Other tracks like "Distinguished Jamaican English" and "Unsung" are strewn together with vintage 70s elements — syncopated horns, wah-wah guitars and string sections — welded like Greek choruses.

The *Herbaliser* may be an able production team, but they're no David Laibrod. Poorly sequenced instrumental spots and rap cuts leave *Something Wicked...* sounding disjointed. They get some solid performances from the MCs they have gathered, including the aforementioned Incanse, Blade (on "Time 2 Build") and Wildflower (on "Good Girl Gone Bad"). Even with such illustrious figures like US rapper MF Doom (on "It Ain't Nasty"), on board, however, there's nothing here to match What's What's showing on "Mission Improbable", from *Herbaliser's* last effort, 1999's *Very Necessary*. The menacing immediacy of its mindblowing title track aside, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is quite a letdown, albeit a harmlessly frivolous and jaunty one.

JAGA JAZZIST A LIVINGROOM HUSH SMALLTOWN SURROUND SOUNDS CD BY JOHN CRADOCKY

Drawing players from a wide spectrum of Norwegian New Music — taking in styles as diverse as experimental electronics, rock and

jazz — Jaga Jazzist's sound is both nostalgic and committed to change. As a ten piece with wide ranging instrumentation encompassing brass, reeds, Fender Rhodes, vibraphone, guitar and drums, they are capable of tight arrangements that exhibit the cool complexity of *Nucleus* and the comforted chaos of Frank Zappa alongside the subtle impressionism of *Tortoise*.

Their sound is a bizarre mixture, but it has great momentum with compositions constantly changing tack, adding new tonal colours and altering mood. On "Going Down", for instance, dark funk grooves are overlaid with smooth lush patterns, only to be sumptuously invaded by ominous bass clarinet figures and electronic disturbance. There's a stimulating sense of surprise at the group's ability to juxtapose such variation without merely making a style collage. The key cohesive is Martin Hoffman's constant and insulating percussion presence — using a mixture of kit and drum machine, he never lets the tension drop, even in laidback passages — twinned with the vibraphone, marimba and percussion of Andreas Mann. The group, and this duo in particular, are in danger of mistaking the reputation of jazz/rock fusion, with a wholly integrated approach to rhythm and a masterful balance of instrumentation. The music is neither too nor overly heavy. Rather, it's a feast of infectious beats and exciting arrangements delicately resolved with nuance to produce a variety of atmospheric pleasures.

JASON KAHN FLURABELLE CUT CUTOWN CD TU M' .01 CUT CUTOWN CD

BY PHILIP SHEPHERDSON

Improv player Jason Kahn, an American currently residing in Zurich, is known as a percussionist, but his use of live sampling software sets his music at a far remove from traditional drumming. Indeed, save for the gongs and chimes that flash intermittently like beacons through *Flurabelle's* studied music, listeners could be forgiven for thinking this is a work of 'pure' digital. Seven untitled tracks span across an hour of untethered drones, noises and crackles. Although the pieces are ostensibly improvisatory in nature, they sound as composed, if not more so, than most programmed microsound. Much of the disc seems on the verge of being overt by a delicate tension, created by the interplay between layer upon layer of loops cycling independently of one another. Kahn's methods may be simple, but his music carries surprising force and variation. Track five, a swirl of distant bell tones and static, sounds uncannily like the nuclear grove at the end of Sonic Youth's *EVOL*, while track seven evokes a field full of pinewoods seeping lazily, and ominously, out of sync.

The unpreannounced TU M', made up of Andrea Gabriele, Rosendo Polidoro and Emiliano Romanelli, are an Italian trio, whose take on improvisation closely echoes Kahn's own. Their crackle and drone could just as easily be attributed to a lone computer musician, but knowing it's an ensemble work primes the ear for the collisions and collusions that are absent from solitary laptoping. Like Kahn's music, these nonlinear forays into ethereal textures and prolonged squeals lean heavily on loops.

Beneath the surface of their high-pitched lines and steampunk exhalations, these dissonances suck, drip, and chafe, like impudent forces and invisible chemical reactions.

LARSEN REVER

YOUNG GUN YG19 CD
BY JIM HARNES

The incredible story of how Larsen's Rever came into being verges on the stuff of urban legend. But the source of the tale is the album's producer Michael Gara, an unlikely suspect in the arena of public deceit. After receiving a series of arcane CD-ifs from an Italian art collective cum hematic cult called Larsen, Gara was offered big money and a plane ticket to Italy to produce their next album. Intrigued, he took Larsen up on the offer and headed off to Italy upon his arrival. Gara was never allowed to see the group, who shrouded themselves in the studio behind a screen and communicated with him only through their assistants. From what he could ascertain from the assistants' broken translations, Larsen's actions were like some ceremonial rite. Correspondingly, Gara felt like an active producer than a passive field recorder.

Nor Larsen's liturgical music for these unknown rites suggested a group who are far more interested in Sonic Youth than the archetypes of ceremonial musics. Like other American projects such as Unwound and Blonds Redhead, they centre their songs around the dynamics of multiple guitars, which may erupt in buzzsaw staccato and then glide into sublime arpeggiated chords. Often in forceful minor key chords, their guitars interlock into pulsing math-rock grooves, counterpointed with accented, trumpet blunts, mechanical tube whistles, electronic rumbles and other rich textural elements. Even in his role as an observer, it is clear that Gara had a considerable influence over their majestic yet strangled sound, either as a musical influence or possibly as the designer who fitted the album together as a unified whole. For such a process holds more than a few similarities to how Gata constructed Swans' *The Great Annihilator*.

LOCUST WRONG

TOUCH TONIC 2RCD
BY PAUL D'AMERSON

Mark Van Hoien's mid-90s Ambient electronics for R&S/Apollo were highly polished explorations of dark textures and ominous atmospheres, but interestingly he and his collaborating vocalists have moved into discredited pop featuring lead vocalist Hilo Adonis, plus Lisa Miller, Seofee's Sara Peacock, Iara Patterson and Vanny Miller. Mixing represents Larsen's boldest pop discography, but though it draws more from early 90s R&B than from current chart toppers like Timberland, "Believe In The Disc" is an update of the Eurythmics' "Love Is a Drug", run through Ambient's synthetic filter "Sweet Sky" sounds like Kote Bush blown back to earth via satellite from a helium-soaked, offworld paradise. Likewise, "What Do You Care?", the record's unquestionable highlight, buries the vocals in such a gurgly way as to suggest orchids blooming on the polished surfaces of George Lucas's *THX1138*.

Wrong dates back to 1998 but languished in label limbo until 2001; it doesn't sound dated,

however — at least not in the conventional sense. In fact, the time is quite out of joint on *Wrong*. Van Hoien reportedly uses analogue synthesizers to evoke the spirit of the computer music of the 70s, but the vocal treatments — shudderingly bright and jawdroppingly ecstatic — and the filtered breakbeats combine to create an idiosyncratic sound that doesn't belong to any identifiable era. The sense of dislocation is heightened by the album's format: two discs designed to be played simultaneously. Disc one contains the album proper, but the companion disc of cued-up complementary drones casts a quadrophonic shadow. Aside from the nominal "interactivity" implied, it's not clear what's gained by the use of this format over, say, a surround sound DVD, but the experience of playing the discs together is enough to dispel scepticism.

WILL MENTER ABOVE AND BELOW GROUND LEVEL

RESONANCE RS06-CD
BY CLIVE BELL

Above and Below Ground Level is the second in a series of highly personal solo releases by Will Menter, a British improviser and instrument maker now resident in France. These collections of recordings function almost like an audio diary — Menter's France is an elemental landscape of remote caves, waterfalls, frozen lakes and a wintry hilltop where the listener encounters a jangling herd of cows wearing bells. And he treats this environment as though it's there for the musician to play with. On his previous CD, *Celebrating Rain*, he employed a waterfall to play his sound sculptures, tossed slate pines about on a beach eroded by composed of slant, and hauled rocks into the echoing walls of a Victorian underground water tank. On the new disc he shifts to snowy shores, a frozen lake, an equisette, ear-bolting sound that I could happily listen to for far longer than the four minutes here.

The other outstanding track has a marmite band of slate played with fingertips inside a resonant orrery beneath Cluny Abbey. So the disc finishes and also starts underground — the strange opening track places us in a cave deep in the Pyrenees, where a heavily accented tourist guide invites us to contemplate in silence the phonetic "dots and dashes" painted on the walls. Elsewhere Menter coaxes gentle rhapsodies from large garden pots, made by his partner from field earth. Discoret use of a computer transforms his samples of sound made from rubbing pots, or clapping inside their gaping mouths. A nasal bass clarinet joins in — this is the mikazoozone, made by Menter in the days when he led Overflow, a small but lively orchestra that performed haphazard melodies on public spaces.

This album is likewise full of gentle surprises, as Menter combines improv, Ambient and environmental sound in his own idiosyncratic but very accessible blend.

RAZ MESINAI BEFORE THE LAW

TAZAR TZ11-CD
BY JULIAN COWLEY

Jerusalem-born New Yorker Raz Mesinai resorts as Badaab. On *Before The Law*, his Middle Eastern commitments and deep dub affinities have, on the surface at least, been put on hold

as he enters the world of Franz Kafka, the Czech Jewish writer whose macabre fables tap so revealingly into the wellsprings of totalitarian oppression. To begin with, the brief title track offers a rapidfire resume of Kafka's ominous environments: the rat at the door, ring of the bell, creaking hinge, chiming clock, shattering glass, crash of heavy tread. Scrambled laughter is heard somewhere in there too. Then edgy instrumental voicings and bursts of electronic sound build images of sinister activity and neurotic motifs.

In Kafka's narrative *Metamorphosis*, the ability of protagonist Gregor Samsa's sister to play the violin is a touchstone of shared human value stranded in a bureaucratic nightmare. In Mesinai's rendering, the longest piece in what is effectively a 50 minute suite, Mark Feidman's violin harks back to a music of community. But with Jacoby Lucci's frantic cello and the composer's piano tangents, it also evokes Samsa's terminal isolation, transformed into a helplessly willing insect by the soulless routines of a commercialised society.

Mesinai uses a second violinist, a violist and two cellists on the album, drawing across echoes of modernist idiom, his instrumental scores may be a world apart from his other activities, but his skills as score designer, processing and editing, deploying instrumental material as samples, play a key role here. And his expressive percussion work is crucial to the tense unfolding of *Before The Law*'s powerful, unresolved drama.

MONOLIGHT FREE MUSIC

RUPE GIVANSON/CD 90023 CD
BY TOM PEARWARD

Monolight is Rune Kristoffersen, owner of Oslo label Rune Grammaton and former member of the 1980s Norwegian electro-punk group the Lupo Logo. This is his second album as Monolight, and as the CD's title might imply, it's an attempt to move towards a sort of semi-structured improvisation, away from the self-described "vibratic techno" of his 1995 debut. Kristoffersen reports that much of the music here was made using three synths and some effects processors. The simple set-up allowed him to play live while manipulating preprogrammed sequences as he recorded direct to digital. Resulting takes were either kept or rejected, but left unedited.

This simplicity of method and limitation of material goes a long way towards defusing Kristoffersen's course through each of *Free Music*'s ten pieces. The musician acknowledges this, especially in the four pieces called "Duo Abstraction" where two contrasting elements — lines, gestures or sounds — simply bounce off of each other. The first and most hermetic of the "duo" pieces pits a windsuck of analogue tube tuning against an electronic drip, while a faintly perceptible bassline seems to hum underneath. But the bassline isn't really there. Despite the simplicity of construction, some pieces sound complex enough to imply acoustic details that haven't been played.

In the same way, the *Aphes Twin* like "Four Inevitably" overlays a dirty, bitty groove with a high frequency fidget that implies drum "in" bass chatter. But many of the other tracks are much less opaque, and Kristoffersen's frequently replicated structural procedures do start to pull



Boiled down to a single CD, Jack Nitzsche's problematic songs and soundtracks shine with a new lustre. Richard Henderson on an American contrarian



Surf's up, sir: Jack Nitzsche

JACK NITZSCHE
THREE PIECE SUITE: THE REPRISE
RECORDINGS 1971-1974
 WARNER ARCHIVES/RHINO HANDMADE RHMM7787 CD
 BY RICHARD HENDERSON

He could have been a contender, and in a subliminal sense, he was: Jack Nitzsche's name was an imprimatur of quality, whether in reference to his abilities as arranger (Phil Spector's girl group records), session musician (he added keyboards to The Rolling Stones' "Play With Fire" and "Paint It Black") or film composer (*Performance*, *An Officer And A Gentleman*). His contributions to "solo" albums by Neil Young and Leo Kottke – blending musique concrète and celestial string arrangements – should have earned Nitzsche billing as a full collaborator. Yet as is often the case with those most truly at home in the recording studio, out of sight means out of luck when kudos is handed out. With any luck, this posthumous compilation (Nitzsche died in August 2000), *Jack Nitzsche: Three Piece Suite: The Reprise Recordings 1971-1974* will restore some lustre to a reputation tarnished by brushes with the law and substance abuse.

Three Piece Suite, comprises three sets of recordings made by Nitzsche before he decided to focus exclusively on film music. The first set tracks are from 1972's *St Giles Cripplelegate*, an orchestral effort recorded at the London church whose acoustic character is marked by singular reverberation. (The church was also the site of the orchestral recording for John Cale's *Academy In Pain*, issued immediately prior to Nitzsche's album). Trading on his arranger credits on Neil Young's *Harvest*, Nitzsche led The London Symphony Orchestra, some 130 members strong, through compositions that alluded to, variously, Broadway musicals, 12-tone rows, Sibelius and the immigrant composers of early Hollywood (especially Bernard Herrmann). The massive ensemble lumbered

through melodies that probably needed the sprightly touch of a smaller ensemble, whacking every downbeat with rafter-loosening tympani hits. This did not go down well with Young's fans, or whoever Warners thought might buy in to the idea of neoclassical work from a pop composer. Though the results were scarcely noticed upon initial release, *St Giles Cripplelegate* symbolised the maverick A&R spirit that set Warner Bros apart from other majors in the post-hippy era.

Next, Jack Nitzsche was to be the star arranger's debut album as singer/songwriter. The film director Robert Downey (whose *Greaser's Palace* Nitzsche had scored) co-produced and penned cryptic lyrics for seven of the album's 11 tracks. Completed in 1974 and subsequently shelved by Warner Bros, the project was accorded a tantalising description – part Beach Boys, part Kurt Weill – in a *Crawdaddy* magazine profile on Nitzsche from the same year. Quoting Downey's quavering chorus for "Hanging Around" ("If you believe in a key/Then you believe in a lie"), this citation was the sole evidence of Jack Nitzsche's existence for decades to come.

As finally issued on *Three Piece Suite*, Jack Nitzsche both lives up to its legend and disappoints in nearly equal measure. The album wears its faults on its sleeve. Nitzsche's vocals were no doubt the primary reason that the record was pulled from Warners' schedule. Whether set against slick, big band blues niffs or the walking bassline of "Who Say What To Who" (where, weirdly, his phrasing resembles that of mid-career Iggy Pop), the composer's singing is routinely cringe-inducing. Yet his arrangements are never less than intriguing, and more often than not, inspire lasting awe.

Nitzsche's iconoclastic song structure, made possible by crossfades and dramatically obvious tape splicing, was episodic in the extreme. His fearless musical eclecticism served him well through the 40

film scores he composed; here, the same quality informs instrumental nonsequiturs that shimmer into view, then disappear as songs wind down.

Foreshadowing his Oscar-winning theme for *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, "I'm The Loneliest Fool" loops an orchestral passage, then segues to a piano solo in elliptical metre. The disingenuous tough-guy lyric of "On The Moodus Run", gives way to ragtime piano and Samuel Barber-like horn flourishes above a rhythmic track of trotting footsteps, which, in turn, melts into a vintage shape note melody realised on glass harmonica. (In his liner notes, Eliot Mazer, producer of both *Harvest* and *St Giles Cripplelegate*, describes Nitzsche's painstaking approach to recording the latter, tuning several wine glasses by drinking the excess Chardonnay to lower the pitch, then overdubbing individual notes until the piece was complete... and Nitzsche was looped.)

Despite the cast of session players (including John Fahey), most of these pieces turn upon Nitzsche's own keyboard prowess. Then, of course, there are his strings. Although unsure about his vocal abilities and the merits of his own lyric writing, he always knew that he could, by his own description, "rip your fuckin' heart out with these strings". This was not an idle boast. As first heard on "Memo From Turner" (from his score for Nicholas Roeg's *Performance*) his magical string sound surfaces repeatedly during Jack Nitzsche, a laminate of unison voicings, nuanced phrasing and specific microphone placement.

Four demo recordings cut in 1971 round out the album. Two of these, recorded well in advance of Jack Nitzsche, are more than equal to the tracks intended for his solo debut. Nitzsche, a brilliant but irascible talent, never played these final recordings for his label. As they, too, contain the signature tremor of his string arrangements, Rhino deserves credit for rescuing the final examples of a sound that died with its creator.

over the course of the album. Given the difficulty of the performing set up he designed for himself, that might have been inevitable. What is more surprising, though, is that *Stranded in Narrow Air* and "Still Light," the two tracks that Kristoferson apparently composed in real time, sound so similar to those he made on the fly.

MUSICIAN

SPACETIME
CUMINGFORD RUNESLEY CD

BY BILL SHELDON

There are moments on every Mujica album where it's plain as day that they are a great group, a rule Spacetime reinforces. Granted, being a group entails tactical planning that is all but precluded by the strictures of freely improvised music. Yet group mentality has propelled jazz since before Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, its vitality central to a slew of co-op free jazz units ranging from the New York Art Quartet to Other Dimensions in Music. Perhaps this is why it's easy to think of Mujica's music as "free jazz" as opposed to "improvised music." The collective nature of saxophonist Paul Durnall, drummer Tony Levin, bassist Paul Rogers and pianist Kirk Tippet has the requisite complementary personas to extend that trajectory. Though usually much sought in intensity, Durnall's episodes of seismic interplay approach that of Center Of The World (Frank Wright, Bobby Few, Alan Silva and Muhammad Ali), while their investigations of textures and procedures have ample British rigor. As evidenced on these two well designed, 3D minuscule-plus-compact, their compatibility and well-honed interplay turn potential liabilities into substantial assets.

Drumming, constructing extended improvised pieces from multiple takes is a recipe for disaster, particularly when the edit points are as noticeable as those on "Spacetime." Yet, the cut and paste method works best when it is the most obvious. Rogers's first solo on "Spacetime" abruptly fades after he pivots from farsical strumming to a Mingus-like tight song motif. Seconds elapse before Durnall commences an uncomplicated soprano solo, elongating long hushed tones and pregnant pauses into a Lushain statement. It proves to be a viable, respectable-shrill jumpstart, and when the technique is employed towards the end of the piece during another Rogers solo, it creates a structural reverbation. On the latter occasion, Rogers re-enters with feverish alto explorations, triggering a rousing, not quite explosive finale, hailed by the stop and splash of Levin's cymbalisms, highlighted by Tippet's sporting lines.

Apparently, the editing is more seamless on "Equally Woven Spiritual Communication." While the lead lines of Durnall's soprano and Tippet's improvised piano merge into the piece deliberately placed to pacify, Rogers's adamant sawing and Levin's abbe and swells sharpen the dialogue, setting up the first of several high intensity passages. With Durnall's soprano in full flight, guided by Tippet's block chords and tight hand runs, Mujica hit their stride, producing a searing heat that ecstatic jazz warblers can only pry for. What's mildly veering about this and other similar episodes on Spacetime is their brevity, a measure of free jazz's decades long tradition of

longform overkill. The wisdom of their conception — which is equally essential in its most pure, finely detailed and resolutely non-dramatic passages — becomes clearer with each replay of the CD.

While this approach to album building stands in contrast with the overly organic approach of their 1990 live performance debut, the Journey (Cuneiform), it does yield the impression that Mujica are a thoroughly collective group. Whereas Tippet was widely seen as the de facto leader at their inception, it would be a very unlikely conclusion drawn on this base of Spacetime. The pianist is now more likely to catch the wave stirred up by the others than to set the piece's tone or usher in sweeping changes. Midway through "Equally...", Durnall's breathy tenor phrases initially swirl about Rogers's soft sawing, their respective edges sharpening with each phrase. Tippet and Levin enter as Durnall combusts, spinning melodic, late Coltrane-style notes and scalar patterns, piquant pepper shifts pungent arpeggios and color into the wake of Durnall's phrases, and seems perfectly suited to take the lead when the latter lays out. But, Tippet differs to Rogers, one of a surprising number of instances where the pianist subordinates his expressiveness to the many plot twists planned in both pieces.

Witnessing personalities and relationships open in longstanding groups is a time-honored jazz spectator sport. More often than not, it is hearing how one or two players come to their own that makes the exercise gratifying. Mujica are the rare case where the whole group evolve before your ears on each new recording.

GORDON MUMMA LIVE-ELECTRONIC MUSIC

CD/ACT TITANIUM CD

BY JIMMY COWLEY

In 1973, in his weekly column for New York's Village Voice, Tom Johnson noted that composer Gordon Mumma's objective "is not to create lively effects, or to convey human emotions, or to create good music in any traditional sense. It has to do with machines communicating with them, playing games with them, trying to accept them, and simply letting them do their thing." Mumma's machines, Johnson added, "are telling us something; and if we can adjust to their wavelength 'the music seems fascinating and important.' For a long time now such adjustment has been made difficult by the scarcity of recorded documentation of Mumma's singular work. But during that period new technologies and fresh concepts have produced a sizeable audience for music that engages in such creative dialogue with machines.

Mumma is one of those key innovators whose impact has been felt not directly but through layers of mediation — the stone cast into the water that seems to vanish yet sends out ripples that alter the nature of the pond. Live Electronic Music, following Levy Music's Studio Retrospect (2000), allows the committed and the curious to fish out the stone and experience firsthand. It's a measure of Mumma's success that, despite all that has occurred musically in the intervening years, his compositions from the 1960s remain challenging, resistant to easy assimilation, ruggedly stimulating and unsettling in a way that matter.

In Johnson's piece and in Richard Henderson's recent review with Mums (The Wire 216) the soldering job is mentioned as a basic, compositional resource. When no vehicle was available to take the composer to his desired destination he had to build one, hands-on, shirshives rolled up. Integrity has been one of his strengths, but so too has adaptability and on That Particle (1985), the first track on the new CD, Mumma uses a computer it is linked, as suits the composer's purpose, to an early synthesizer that approximates (sometimes very roughly) the sounds of acoustic percussion. An actual percussionist, the impeccable William Winick, engages in ironic dialogue with this quirky imitative system.

The four remaining recordings are legendary pieces from the 1960s. Hompage (1967), heard here in its entirety for the first time, is a solo performance by the composer on waldhorn and wire-horn systematically transformed and distorted by means of cyberspace devices. On Mea (1966) Mumma assigns the reedy sounds of David Taylor's harmonium to cyberspace processing. Huh (1965) is a quartet performance. Mumma on the title instrument plus the voices of Robert Ashley and George Caspaccio, cyberspacefully disguised beyond recognition by William Roberts. Medium Sized Mograph (1963) casts a cyberspace halo around Ashley and Mumma's stark piano playing. The word "cyberspace" needs a gloss, and Mumma provides one in the sleeve notes, it derives from "the Greek 'kyberna' meaning 'to steer or guide' while 'space' from the Latin 'spacia', pertains to sound." Mumma's machines steer sound, he invents and he navigates, directed by an uncommon vision. Writing again in 1977, Tom Johnson noted Mumma's "preference for viscous sounds, and his remarkable technical skills." Live-Electronic Music provides a much needed opportunity to sample those and other aspects of his fascinating and important sonic explorations.

SIMON NABATOV TRIO THREE STORIES, ONE END

ACT 94013 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

It's quite clear from listening to record Simon Nabatov's playing that he's a musician who knows a lot of other music. He recently appeared on an ACT recording by the group Swing Kings, who essentially pay tribute to the Berry Goodman Quartet. But Nabatov, unhelped by the tradition, felt at ease to graduate between the lightness of touch typical of Teddy Wilson and dissonant swerves reminding us that the piano can be 88 tuned drums. Three Stories, One End plays some equally surprising stylistic tricks. Thelonious Monk's "Epitaph" and John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" are both coerced into becoming ballads. "St Thomas" becomes Sonny Rollins' blowed through Dave Brubeck's sock chords and Johnny Mandel's "Emily" gets a bizarre introduction that sounds like a psaltery of Schoenberg's Suite For Solo Piano, Opus 25.

The opening title track is a deceptively charming Jarrett-like waltz that doesn't get too much away from what's to unfold. The atonal introduction to "Emily" therefore comes as an incongruous shock, and it becomes clear that Nabatov works with a composer's mind. His improvisation on Wiedel's changes is nudely

interrupted by atonal outbursts that eventually threaten to snap the structure. Drummer Tom Roney outlines Monk's melody line at the start of the extraordinary monsoon of "Epitaph," but Nabatov plays the performance in the opposite direction by playfully manipulating its harmonic structure into a flowing ballad throughout. Roney and bassist Drew Gress attempt to push the piece back to its natural orbit, but Nabatov won't hear of it.

The spike, concerned then of Nabatov's "for Heberle" implies Nichols rather than Hancock and this is a dazzling performance, full of quick changes of direction and rerecording. As Andy Hamilton pointed out in The Wire 214, Nabatov is indeed an underused master and each new recording reveals previously hidden aspects of his personality.

DYLAN NYOUKIS THE SHIELD THAT PIERCES THE EARTH

CD/ACTE RECORDS NO NUMBER LP

BY DAVID KETNAM

Glasgow rock Dylan Nyokus is half of the brains behind Scottish avant-rock outfit Prok Decay, aka Decker Pingo, an ever-fluctuating ensemble of non-musicians whose transcendental approach to tape noise, not to mention their many semi-rude live performances, enlivened the otherwise faceless underground cassette scene throughout the 90s. Nyokus's first solo vinyl sees his aesthetic mature further from the early basement noise approach to more fully position itself in that last uncharted void somewhere between LA Free Music Society-style electronic wackery, convoluted, house-inspired sound art and sophisticated DIY punk. Still, the sound of ululating vaporous real-to-les remains dominant, with this, translucent swarms of layered sound dancing round the cave walls. The opening "Excerpt From: Dead Pharaoh Visits Smokey Don Monkeys Eyeball T'amps in on a Staggered loop of echoes that feels beautifully wrong until the cumulative weight of the circular shadow and electronic voice combines to make it feel perfectly right. While "Clay's Feeding Vamp" for detuned acoustic guitars verily struck, stroked and strangled, sounds like one of American pianist Harry Partch's hobo odysseys relocated to the bus shelters of a Southern English seaside town, "The Lonely Way To Go-Go" is considerably less terrestrial. Subtitled as a "Gaston Dr A Theme By Neil Campbell" (Campbell being the leader of UK draws The Vibes cathedral Orchestra), it's a haunting walloping collage based around long one-note ones, leaping and growling above the on/off cut of a cassette recorder. It's an otherworldly piece, possessing a gravity that belies its simple construction. Like Col's Time Machines, recent listenings threaten to distort the flow of time. The chemicals may be different but the destination remains the same — essentially, elsewhere.

FRANK PAHL & KLIMPEREI MUSIC FOR DESSERTS

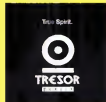
IN POLY SIGNS (PVSIG) CD

BY DAVID MANDEL

In a collaboration that was clearly meant to be, Music For Desserts brings together Mehrgan based composer/multi-instrumentalist Frank Pahl (see The Wire 206) and French '90s-pop ensemble Klimperei (Farranose and Christophe

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Petchenits) All but five of the basic tracks were created using Pahl's homemade automatic instruments, the remainder featuring a hand-crafted antique barrel pump. The automatic instruments employ everything from primitive computers to old sewing machine treadles, in conjunction with multiple bending and plucking devices, to create rhythms and melodies in some unpredictable patterns. The compositions are completed in a give-and-take process, whereby the musicians trace the generated rhythms and melodies to taste while constructing their own parts around what the automatic mechanisms are playing.

Though not as saccharine as his titles imply ("Charlotte Rude", "Lips Fittens", "Stuffed Angelica"), the 18 cuts on *Deserts* are suffused with a delicate, childlike quality — much like Kurpen's own releases, but with the added randomness of Pahl's gamelan-style gadgets (not to mention his trademark whistling). Very French, and naive in the best sense, they function as full-length miniatures, almost. Sometimes the automatic ukuleles, zethers and glöckenspiel messily dominate, pushing the tune's melody into the distance, while elsewhere they drone and buzz in the background, softening the edges of the main theme. While never overwrought, the sonic spectrum is huge — piano, by guitar, melophone, air organ, chimes, Bulgarian flute, metalloids and African heap — and the recording, in gloriously wide stereo, is bright and lush. A wonderfully successful joint effort.

RADIO BOY THE MECHANICS OF DESTRUCTION

ACCIDENTAL PROMO CD
 BY PHILIP SHELBURNE

Electronic music has rarely managed to engage with politics on any meaningful level, outside of rare outcrops like Age Plasides or the micro-politics espoused by independent labels' DIY stance. Bereft of rock and Hip-hop's lyrical content, electronic music has been forced to act out strategies of resistance through more abstracted questions of form. Autecne's *Ant EP* (1994) shook two fingers in the air at the UK's Criminal Justice Bill, which struck at the free party movement through the criminalisation of repetitive beats, by engineering dance tracks made entirely of non-repeating sequences. Experimental photographers, walking towards even very different from dance music's pleasure-come-agony, have had better luck incorporating the sounds of resistance directly into the fabric of their tracks. Christopher Decker's *N30: Live At The WTO Protest* (1999) was made entirely from field recordings of Seattle's anti-WTO protests, while Los Angeles collective Ultra-red has tackled the United States' anti-immigration policies by recording the sounds of border clashes and the voices of undocumented workers. But Matthew Herbert, a House producer who has increasingly politicised not only his music but also his public persona (including a reading list of anti-capitalist texts on his Website, for instance), is one of the first artists to fuse dance music's seductive rhythms with political photography's confrontational sampling techniques.

Herbert's *Radio Boy* destruction, released under Herbert's Radio Boy moniker, is a product of its

times (and indeed, one of the few pieces of music one actually hopes will sound dated in ten years) in that every track is sourced from, and titled after, various icons of globalisation: Herbert's topics, and targets, will be familiar to any reader of texts like *Fast Food Nation* or *No Logo*. McDonalds, Gap, Starbucks, the UK industry. But using the transmuting techniques he's perfected on recordings as *Doctor Rokit* and under his own name, Herbert doesn't so much deconstruct his sound sources as pulse them into dusty chunks of static, which he then sequences into his trademark lumbering techno gait. The quality of the tracks themselves — which he has claimed to be only secondary importance — leads to an intriguing dissonance. While they fit the patterns of dance music, they're too gooey and thin to be effective on a dancefloor, and they're invariably too abstruse and hermetic to provide reassuring home listening. The music's generic instability offers a secondary critique, however unconscious, of commodified listening, where pop music's success — that is, its saleability — is guaranteed only by the music's conformity to established modes of consumption.

Some may argue that *The Mechanics Of Destruction* fails aesthetically, even where it may succeed as propaganda, because Herbert's digital signal processing strips his sounds of any referentiality. You don't actually hear him snacking a pair of Nike trainers against an Adidas shoebox, or shredding a copy of the Rupert Murdoch-owned Sun, but only the pale-prime explosion common across any number of "experimental" releases today. But a contrary reading is just as convincing. By deconstructing the sounds of globalised capital so radically and reinserting them into the framework of "entertainment," Herbert has pointed out capital's vast subterfuge, its stealth and deceit, as well as our complicity and passivity. He's akin to a flycock who tells you, with an unlikely grin, that he may have spit in your burger — but only after you've already taken a bite.

HORATIU RADULESCU STRING QUARTET NO 4

DAKD R24092 CD
 BY TOM PERCHARD

Horatiu Radulescu's fourth string quartet bears the snappy subtitle, *For Five String Quartets*. Or *A String Quartet Surrounded By An Imaginary 128-String Vase Da Garba*. But Renaissance instrument is able to produce a virtuosic sound rich in overtones, and have the composer has eight overblown quartet parts serving as resonating strings for a central "live" group. On this 1989 recording, The Arditi Quartet supply both live and overdubbed parts. Radulescu is what they call a specialist, of sorts, working with the timbres and overtones associated with his synthetic, non-tempered scales. But where some other specialists create colourful, delicate and web-like music, the Romanian-born composer instead favours huge, atomised logs of sound.

In this piece, the interaction between live and prerecorded music creates two different narratives — one slowly progressing with audible logic, the other feverishly improvisatory and confused. The live material, slow and thick, is gradually ramped up and down a

microtonal scale, its duration and proportions changing accordingly, while the recorded harmonic clouds and hoarse high tones simply linger. Although Radulescu constantly explores different bowing techniques in order to produce varying timbral and harmonic nuances, as this recording the piece has a harsh, relentlessly white sound. No doubt this was Radulescu's design, but the Arditi's characteristic icy violence strips the music of any warmth and resonance it might have had.

In the piece's sound is its identity, as Radulescu works here with a language from which instrumental gesture is largely absent. Only after 15 minutes has the quartet's material evolved enough to hit its rhythmic characteristics flag to the surface. Even without rhythmic import, though, the piece maintains direction — maybe not forwards, but up. Moving as slowly as it does, the music builds an unusual tension as it rises to, and reaches, each harmonic plateau.

REQ SKETCHBOOK

WARP WARPERS CD
 BY JEROME MAUNSELL

Brighton-based turntablist/graffiti artist Req's first two albums for Skit, One (1997) and Frequency Jams (1998), stuck out a mile from the label's usual product. "This music was made at home," ran the blurb on the back of the latter record, and it certainly sounded like it. Legend had it that all the tracks were finished on a humble Tascam four-track. Starting off with improvisational sketches and out of time Hip-hop beats — which were so muffled in the mix they sounded like they had originally been sampled from tenth generation TDK copies — formed a lachrymose backbone to a melodic census of equally rough and ready sounds coming and going with their own arbitrary logic. Sometimes the results were like hearing a block party half a mile away, with all the sounds of the street dissolving into it.

On this album for Warp, the production standards have been raised a little, though the DIY aesthetic essence remains present and correct. The title, *Sketchbook*, is apt. All of these tracks are at last unassuming, unstructured doodles. The beats revolve around spare, uncomplicated lines, or minimal, unwielded sketches, and have the half-there quality of daydreaming. Req slips further than ever from anything resembling conventional Hip-hop, he weaves in several beatless, drifting tracks, some of which call to mind Aphex Twin's more subtle, off-key moments. There are several highlights — the Eastern, primitive melodies on "Live Jitters", the quiet tinkling of "Waza/Zither", the uneasy Dark Ambient repetitions of "Light" — but it's the overall atmosphere that stays with you: intense, claustrophobic, hairy, idly defined.

While *Sketchbook* is highly likely to bother those who like their beats punched and polished and their melodies focused and cunningly interwoven, there is undoubtedly something charming and unique about it. Req is an original, and compared to the sterile facsimiles and often laboured innovations of so much ngly metronomic computer music, his work feels spontaneous, handcrafted, unfixed to do whatever it wants, even if that means the occasional weirdly berated keyboard flourish.

SAND
STILL BORN ALIVE
SATELLITE ST339 CD

BY TOM RIDGE

Sand have been desecrated as producing cinematic soundscapes, and although they have embarked on a number of interactive performances with independent film makers, the terminology employed doesn't do justice to the gritty drive of the music on their second album. The debut from the Turk quartet was a ringing, if uneven, mixture of colliding styles. Here they sound more streamlined, less wayward, but with an impressively focused sense of simmering energy that occasionally erupts into raging noise. The diversity of Sand's live manifestations, playing with Godspeed You! Black Emperor! and Patrick Pulsinger among others, reflects their musical make-up. "Afrock" leads in with a looping, jazzy rhythm as the double bass that mutates into a fearsome motorik pulse, offset by dissonant electronics. Amid the maelstrom the various group members compete for space, from Hilary Jeffery's trombone to Neil Griffin's drilling guitar. It's like Faust playing Isaac Hayes, combining brutal rigidity with an underlying suppleness, climaxing in a crescendo of noise. "Bug Chaser" follows this broad formula, with loose, free-style drumming rubbing up against punchy industrial electronics. "Body in the River" and "Whalebone Smiles" add a jazzier element, with twanging guitar to create a compelling waltz, reminiscent of Calla's distorted neo-beats workouts.

Sand sound less like a musical collective and more like a group on this album, with a real sense of edgy abrasiveness to their edginess. "Cavens" noisily explodes into life, like The Stooges' "LA Blues" reconfigured for the keyboard, but ultimately resolves itself into a plaintive jazz-tinged melody "Rubber Eye" fuses things off in meltdown as Sand go into full noise terror overdrive. They may invite inappropriate labelling with these sorts of extreme juxtapositions, but on the strength of this release they're helping pioneer a new, open-minded rock aesthetic.

SANDOZ
AFROCENTRIS
INTONED 001 CD

SANDOZ
SANDOZ IN DUB: CHANT TO JAH

SOUL JAZZ SINGS CDLP
BY JEROME MANGUEL

Former Cabaret Voltaire member Richard H Kirk's prolific work rate as a solo artist makes it hard to keep track of his progress. Throughout the 90s, he produced albums at a rate of three or four every year, on several different labels, appearing under a host of pseudonyms: Sweet Exorcist (with Perrot), one third of the Al Seening II, Electronic Eye, Nitrogen, Dark Magnus, Infracture, Al Jah, Blackwood, Orchestra Tenebris. He has been the often visible presence behind an array of records, varying from the cerebral, ambient-inducing exercises in dissociated found sound and media-zooing of Agents With Folksy Memories, to more funky, vocal-free slabs of African percussion. Afrocentrism resurrects the Sandoz moniker for the first time in three years, and reintroduces his own intimate label. For the most part, it shows Kirk in fairly laudable form. There's a strong 'ethio'

favour throughout, with the emphasis on beguiling grooves rather than conventional soundbites. Voices in several different languages filter through the mix, mostly stay firmly in the background, letting the mildly funky rhythms, global flavours and synth stabs take to the fore. Which is a shame. Too much of Afrocentrism merely breeds amiable water, and alarmingly almost comes close to polite background music. It's all worthy enough, but not hell as startling as you might have hoped from someone with Kirk's extraordinary track record.

Sandoz in Dub: Chant To Jah, meanwhile, initially appeared on Touch Back in 1998, and is here reissued on the Soul Jazz label. This earlier project sounds slightly sharper than Sandoz, and it effectively does justice to Kirk's long-standing fascination with the studio craft of Jamaican dub. It's hard to pick out individual highlights – and, correspondingly, there are no real lulls in quality – but it's several notches above most dub CDs, and shows off, among other things, Kirk's uniquely dysfunctional use of the delay unit.

TALVIN SINGH & RAKESH CHAURASIA
VIRA

SONA HURA SINGS CD
BY CLIVE BELL

Rakesh Chaurasia played Indian Tunes on Talvin Singh's solo debut, OK, and has shared on several blasts, if MOR, Indian albums for the Leicester-based Sona Hura label. Here he teams up with Singh for five short songs. Chaurasia's agile flute has a beautiful tone, as creamy as shanklin. His approach to the word extremes: the slow passages are not really slow, and the rapid licks the flame and flamboyance of his mighty uncle Harprasad Chaurasia. But Rakesh has his own voice and knows what he is doing.

As does Talvin Singh, who has been studying tabla since he was five. The tablas are nicely recorded, the bottom end clear in all its sensuous plumpness. He plays with great taste, avoiding flash or grandstanding. Communication between the musicians is excellent, and it's interesting to hear Indian music being delicately tinged with funk by artists who have grown up around the British dance scene. The title track is played with a chilly groove that strikes me as an original contribution to ragga interpretation.

Rather than a tanspa duo, Singh has placed colour washes of synth pads behind the music. This works very well. On the title track the drone is almost absent, replaced by reverb. On "Heaven", overdrives and drags create a very pretty texture. Of course, it's the shuffling pads that turn this into a chillout record, and Singh takes a credit for "sound design and special effects". He could have pushed this approach a lot further, along Lawless production lines perhaps. Indeed, the whole album could have stuck its neck out more, though for all I know Indian music purists are already looming at the mouth. On this occasion, Singh and Chaurasia have opted for lovely rather than bold.

JOSEPH SUCHY
ENTREKIDDOO

ENTREKIDDOO CD
BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

After a series of clearly defined projects, the Cologne-based guitarist Joseph Suchy has

chosen a consciously indeterminate path for his latest CD, Entrekidoo. It has no stylistic credo, following instead a level of free association that randomly fluctuates between electronically generated soundscapes, processed guitar riffs, delicately articulated fingerings and sonic sound stunts. Playing with the depth and density of his sounds and textures, as well as intriguing individual tones of great beauty. Suchy creates interesting juxtapositions but they feel conceptually unconnected, as if they were looking for alternative contexts in which they might thrive. Entrekidoo is clearly a summation of many partly formed ideas that have yet to acquire an overall identity, and as such it's a sketchpad for further exploration.

There is no doubting Suchy's technical adeptness. The connection between different sections is seamlessly achieved and technically accomplished (the index points are provided for convenience and do not indicate divisions in the work), we are told. But devoid of a raison d'être, his many ideas and musical leads lose themselves in a labyrinthine aural maze of information overload.

TOWN AND COUNTRY
CMON

THRILL JOCKEY 114 CD
BY PHILIP CLARK

Town And Country are the Modern Jazz Quartet of avant rock. Though they have a core instrumentation that at least hints at the classical leanings, they play delicate chamber music to rock audiences who are used to hearing more muscular fare. If The MJs' title was bad, then Town And Country have distilled the figures of rock and folk through the interlocking cells and self-generating structures typical of Morton Feldman. Rippling guitar patterns become a backdrop for artfully intertwined celeste and glockenspiel lines knocked slightly out of phase. On C'mon, they increase their colouristic potential by mixing more prominent use of their 'doubling' instruments – bass clarinet, corinet and a second acoustic bass.

Town And Country's previous Thrill Jockey releases, Decoration Day and It All Has To Do With It, dealt with dancing extended structures. At first glance, C'mon's seven tracks in a mere 44 minutes might represent a compromise. No need to worry, however – each track has the joy clarity of cut glass. The opening "Going to Karaman" is classic Town And Country: Ben Vail's diaphanous guitar dovetails with Josh Amon's acoustic bass, around which Lyle Payne (glockenspiel) and Jim Doring (harmonium and celeste) percolate. The piece begins with an abstracted vamp but as soon as the music threatens to evolve into a hazy, hypnotic journey, they pull away from the brink with waves of constantly surprising counterpoint. And there's a moment of sheer Feldman magic near the end when the texture thins out to allow Payne's knotted glockenspiel lines to rise to the surface.

"I'm Apocryphal" is built on a Reichian guitar riff above which complex phrases blip, but "The Bells" and "Palms" find the group refreshing the beds of their language. "The Bells" juxtaposes Vail's fluty corinet and Doring's plaintive bass clarinet against two double basses. The music has the childlike simplicity of a Mafuze drawing, and is often stripped down to the beautifully coloured,

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repeating chords. The handclaps that accompany the other party crier, "Boomerboi," possibly fall on the wrong side of the beat, but the evidence dissolves into a magically tale and dreamy conclusion. As Town And Country's move into mellow artistic maturity, *Come* is an oasis of sensitive calm from our hectic world.

VARIOUS ANTHOLOGY 2: COME ORGANISATION ARCHIVES 1981-1992

SUBSISTANCE RECORDS CD

BY JIM HARRIS

Willem Bennett chose the sonic path of provocation through his *Come* and *Whitehouse* projects in the punk-drug atmosphere of the late 1970s, when audiences were already hearing enough trouble coping with the challenges springing out of Brecht/Brecht's death factory. Matched with a confrontational aesthetic of pure shrieking noise, Bennett's relentless manifestations of ultramodern pornography and his incursions of the darkest moments from human history continue to generate moral indignation all across the political spectrum. Much to his chagrin.

If nothing else, this Bennett-compiled anthology of archive recordings from the *Come Organisation* attests to the constancy of his appetite for outrage. After a brief sizzle as the guitarist for Essential Logic in the late '70s, he found his notions of punk reconfigurable with Sex Pistols/Malcolm McLaren's Situationist and marketing plays. Bennett saw punk as a means of transgression with the potential to expose the personal and/or collective desires of the *d.* Creativity whitewashing the integrity of leading intellectuals like Walter Dargatzis, First Product and Factory, he founded *Come* as a vehicle for his own projects and those of a few kinkier artists. Taking in Dadad collages, proto-dooms and the earliest incarnations of his signature power electronics, this second *Anthology* covers the creative breadth of *Come*'s Bennett-instigated transgressions.

Anthology 2 opens with the whole of *Come*'s final release, the Jim Jack album collaboration between Bennett and Jim "Foster" Threlwell, which starts off with the shifty guitar grut that has since become the staple for groups like Earth, Melvins and Harvey Milk. Intending to "leave listeners feeling suicidal," *Come* apparently drew uninvited doublekick doublebats, before unleashing a squall of painful feedback tones.

Tracks pulled from the *Come Organisation*'s only compilation *For Joe Koch* have the provocation code. The title ironically parodied Beethoven's *For Elise*, but it's named after the Nazi Buchenwald concentration camp commandant's wife, who was notorious for her collection of lamps, handbags and books bound in human skin. Bennett's appropriation of Koch as a negative icon is an example of his ironic logic. Regardless of whether his issue is deemed obscene, pornographic or taboo, whether it's subjectively fetishized or objectively analyzed, he adamantly refuses to explain it as political or ironic or just art. Rather, he coldly retorts, "You know you're facing long jail, just admit it." The "if he's talking about it is the glimpse he's giving listeners inside their own baggage of guilty desires and prejudices. His shock tactics are to bring down listeners' defenses and force the

recognition of their own hypocritical responses.

Anthology 2 passes over *For Joe Koch*'s framing historical recordings of an Imperial Japanese war anthem, spillovering eulogies from Aleister Crowley, a Charles Manson song and a Heinrich Himmler speech. Instead it runs primitive medley cut-ups of unknowns like Musique Concert (sic) and Eat Dirt, alongside Maurizio Bendini's *Isabandini SS MB* and one of Nurse With Words's more psychologically disturbing pieces, "Fashioned To A Deceit Behind A Tree," which collages an abstract cut from sobbing voices and fuzzy guitar drones to back a loop of a German girl pleading for her father.

The enigmatic Bianchi aka MB (see the *Sache-Pitz* review, *The Wire* 215) often sounded like the evil twin of Conrad Schnitzler. Along with his *For Joe Koch* contribution, "Plutoniumcore," *Anthology 2* features two extended tracks from his second *Come* album, *Welterschöpfung*.

VARIOUS GOLDEN YEARS OF THE SOVIET NEW JAZZ VOL. 2

LEO GRYKES 454 4KDCD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Reviewing volume one of this series focusing on Soviet jazz from the 80s and 90s (*The Wire* 214), Ben Watts highlighted his problems with the term 'Soviet New Jazz' and cogently summarised the correlation between what it means to be an artist in a totalitarian state and the resulting ironic humour. This latest instalment largely concentrates in the darker side of that equation.

Okeanos's "Suite For Zakharov" could hardly be closer. The members of the group come from the Zakharov area of Leningrad, described by vocalist and percussionist Sergey Karsavay as a "clumsy and stinking communal blop." The suite has the blacker than black dedication to people of Zakharov "who prematurely passed away [through] depression, hashish, alcohol, urban air and 'social progress'." The structure of the piece is as brutalised, with crude editing and jagged edges of tape adding to the impression of an acid, polluted landscape. It opens with the chilling texture of multitracked clarinet flurries from Ravi Kozov which turn in on themselves to suggest melodic claustrophobia. The rest of the ensemble play on a collection of percussion instruments grabbed from whatever was to hand

— well, the group aim to turn "non-musical sounds" into a "meaningful whole [with] every sound making sense." This level of conceptual aggression is right cut against this music being described as 'jazz', but the piece suggests a whole life of impossible chances and making do. In a final irony Karsavay describes how, despite everything, the group are in love with Zakharov — a may have dogged up their lungs and psyche, but it's fed their creative juices.

If Okeanos's aesthetics are derived from suffocating alienation, then the alienation of synthesizer player Mikhail Chelikin has been purely self-imposed. As Leo Fegen reports, Chelikin has "made it his aesthetic, social and political concept not to conform, me or collaborate with anyone else" and has worked exclusively out of a basement studio in Moscow. The only exception was in 1994: Chelikin's "Probability Symphony In The Style Of Jazz" was a collaboration with a trio led by Ukrainian guitarist Sergey Trolimov, which featured saxophonist

Belenko and drummer Valery Zhar. It's a labyrinth lasting 65 minutes, anchored by the elaborate sonic landscapes Chelikin weaves from his synthesizer. The feeling of infinite space and Chelikin's scorching textures are challenged by a rhythmic bumpy and constant accents Trolimov adds wendy melting off while both Belenko and Zhar feel like isolated figures in barren terrain. Belenko has a suitably expressive wailing tone on tenor saxophone and his dedication is heightened by being placed slightly out of the microphone range. Zhar's drums rattle menacingly, subverting constant satire.

The *Golden Years Of The Soviet New Jazz* series is dedicated to the memory of saxophonist and leader of jazz group Arkhangelsk, Vladimir Retsky, who died as the discs went to press. His group was always more of a jazz group as we understand the term, with recognizable solos over chord sequences either fragmenting or summing up into 'real' sections. The group have been well documented on Leo (with a particularly fine concert recording from Japan) and the first CD of this set widely captures the group's 20th anniversary concert. The performance starts with a giddy unaccompanied solo from each player before the ensemble came together in an ambitious attempt to "present the folk music of our planet through the prism of new jazz." Rimskov's "Uniqueness Dance" appears out of nowhere against a background of African and East European folk tunes, transformed into a plastic structure.

If Retsky's death brings to an end one of the great Soviet jazz ensembles, then the first disc highlights the talents of the leader of the new generation. Stepanovich Petrus Vysnyakovsky's approach to improvisation has something of Lee Konitz's fluidity of line crossed with Steve Lacy's abrupt rhythmic bursts. His first performance with Vyacheslav Ganelin and guitarist Gipsy Hales is a masterpiece. Ganelin riffs beautifully before accompanying figures around Vysnyakovsky's obliquely unfolding lines and they sustain an awesome level of invention for the best part of 40 minutes. Vysnyakovsky describes how he once shook hands with Freddie Hubbard and, much to the trumpetist's annoyance, burnt him with a cigarette. He could burn the fingers of many American stars of his own generation, too.

VARIOUS A NEW GUIDE TO SOUND SCULPTURE AND INVENTED INSTRUMENTS VOL 1

HAIR RECORDS CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A well-measured relative gave me a game for Christmas — a painted wooden box, it came with no instructions, and no one knew how to play it. I fought about it until reaching this CD. Not that it should have employed the game as a sound sculpture, but this album too comes with virtually no information. Which is odd, when most tracks also the best questions are: what is that sound produced and what do the instruments look like?

This is a low-budget overview of several inventors sound sculptures, largely compiled from tapes available on other albums. Those who seek information must content themselves with a skeletal track listing (printed three times on the packaging) and some small photos. A long way, then, from the deluxe box set full colour book format of Bart Hopkin's *Orbitones*, Spoon Hops

And *Beethoven's on Ellipsis*. But there are treasures here too.

It's a while into the record before we encounter a track that can stand on its own two feet musically. *Wala Eastley* and *High Daves*'s opening "Wala Symphony" is a recording crying out to be properly named. Eastley has his head in the heavens, bowing his one-string Arc, through cavernous roars, while Dones has his feet in the kitchen sink, plucking and gating as if painstakingly dismantling a weta. "Five Thousand Square Feet" may well be a gaggle of Eastley's scorching sculptures in a vast gallery space, but I'm guessing, Hans Karsten Rascoe also duets with Dones, and their delicate sound eventually blossoms into the musical equivalent of a sunny garden. Steve Hubbard riles easily striking guitar, played here with a swift gamelan-style technique.

Percussionists Tim Brooks and Trevor Taylor subject Derek Shell's metal sculptures to electronic treatment, creating two focused and skilful pieces that considerably extend the range of contemporary percussion. Chase Smith creates intense music from slowly decaying chords, bowing his self-built metal instruments. Meanwhile, the Baschet Brothers, who have been in this game for years, seem to be coaxing gentle melodies from stroked metal rods. It's futuristic in a severely ironic way. Life Spook humming the Vulcan cries of his childhood.

Quite a shock in this gentle context is Alan Lamb's "Night Passage", an awesome record of angry electricity, lightning splats and subsonic rumbling. We read reports recognise Lamb's recordings of half a mile of abandoned telephone wires in the Australian outback. Others will state in confusion at it any photo of our man looking like a former fanger an electric fence. The final track is an excellent performance of Harry Partch's "Dark Brother", from the American Festival of Microtonal Music. Partch's piece poem of fervent stoicism is decomposed (great vocals by Johnny Renard) over a monotonal organ, cello-type things and other unspecified Partchian creations. A dark and visionary music.

VARIOUS NO MORE... (NO MOUROI)

IN POLY DISCS 35131 CD

BY DAVID MANDL

No More... brings an embarrassment of riches to fans of French leftfield pop and rock, with music by Pascal Comelade, Pierre Bastien, Willemijn, Louis De Buick, L'Espresso Raps, Supplé, L'Imonade, Les Batteries and others, as well as an appearance by Robert Wyatt. All the artists involved donated their efforts to this anti-war compilation, the proceeds from which will benefit organisations helping civil population suffering from wars and bombs.

While it's a treat to have a collection that brings together of these great Gallic groups, some of whom (like *Supplé* and *L'Imonade*) are heard from off too rarely, there are few big surprises here. Top tunes, tricky lyrics, primitive synthesizers, melodious and kazoo abound, with Al Karmat (who have between neo-psychedelia and Family Fodder-style pop) offering the only thing approaching *swishswish* sax instrumentation. Most of the other contributors use the now familiar musical ingredients of the French 'youth music' model: muted trumpets and lo-fi electronic drums (Bastien);

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Electronic music: Joe Manno

After the joyous sprawl of last year's 20th anniversary box set, Rough Trade have once more teamed up with Mute to release **Rough Trade Shape: Electronic 02** (Mute CD/USMWM023 2ACD). There is no narrative context here, no thematic exploration of a particular aspect of electronic music, just 41 open-ended selections by shop staff that cut through electro, avant-garde composition, synth-pop, techno and strange offerings from historical forebears. Chronology is jettisoned in favour of stand alone tracks or brilliant juxtapositions between subject matter, sounds and whatever else suggests itself. Early on Red Freeman & The Blue Men (a Joe Meek production from 1968) sing, "I hear a new world/Calling me... Now can I tell/What's in store for me?" over a weird desert island mix of drums and guitars. As The Mire's Rob Young peers out in his slownotes, this call came in 1950 when the possibilities of electronic music were just beginning to be explored. It sounds like a message carried across the ether from a long distant past until it crunches up against Oval's "Kerolism", where the similarly detuned electronic tones echo tropical harmonies and rhythms. Another favourite segue is the eternally weird Raymond Scott's shiny-happy advert about inventions of headphones followed by Schneider TM's woozy cover of The Smiths' "There is a Light That Never Goes Out". But at least like Carl's "I Want More", New Order's "586", UB's cover of JB's "Superbad", Kevin Blacklock's "Mean: And... and... and... and... Bruce Blacklock's perverse "Muzic Old Devil" keep the mood upbeat; infecting the more "serious" compositions, like Jesse Henry's Alesha, Frances's "Q1", John Cage's Radio Music (Editt) or Don's "First", which have a lighthearted ring to them. In this context even Neri's brutal, unremitting "Out Out Out" has a certain charm. The title Electronic 02 implies that this is just the first in a series. Let's hope there are many more. (BB)

True Spirit (Decca 56185/8 3ACD) follows a rather less idiosyncratic path through the annals of electronic music. Cherry-picking the best tracks from the Berlin label's ten years at the forefront of dancefloor techno, *True Spirit* can't help but be singe-mingled, but this gives it nevertheless a new definition: a war of attrition composed of punishing drums, burning oscillator riffs in a classic Berlin pounded like Maimon's "Play" and Venetian's "L'op", and the same damn textures, track after track after track. The only escape comes from Eddie "Flashin'" Fowles, Gendy, Neil Landstrumm and Crispen Glover. Did classics like X-103's "Sense Destroyer" and Blake Baxter's "The More Time (Red Planet Mix)" sound distinctly

undistinguished in this company and make you wonder why Hardcore was so commemoated from the church of Techno by Derrick May all those years ago. (PSH)

A more contemporary yet benign, if not less singe-mingled, overview of Berlin's music scene (with a couple of singers like Arto Lindsay and People Like Us) is provided by **Joimfort/Labor Presents Ocean Club** (WMPREC 62706 CD). Compiled by Gudrun Gut and Thomas Fehlmann, the album concerns itself mostly with sing-songy, often grivily-lit electronics from Barbara Morgenstern, Robert Lippok, Clucker, Cosec Music, etc. There are also tracks from Seidcenter (essentially Thomas Brinkmann appending a synth riff that sounds like the guitar riff from Bob Marley's "Could You Be Loved") to a loop from Dezer Wansel's "Life On Mars" and Round Three featuring Tiamen singing on top of what may be the most toured Techno-sub of his entire career. (PSH)

It's been a busy couple of months for Joimfort/Labor. **WMPREC 627011 CD** is a compilation of artists who have appeared at Berlin's Native Lab events, which are sponsored by Native Instruments, the company behind the ubiquitous Reaktor audio software. All the usual suspects are here — Jake Mandel, Richard Devine, Ensoniq, you know the flavour — but at least a few have found some decent tracks in their mountains of GAs to throw Joimfort/Labor's way. Ke\$ha's "Dance Die Why You Always Hating On Me" may very well be Dr Dre thrown in a vipers' nest of gibberish, but it actually sounds like what a Malian rasta player and an Egyptian soul player might produce if they dived on DSP software. FX Random's "Dance" is the LSD with Max patches on their dinner jackets, while Wadslaw Diel shakes his Cuban groove thing on "The Super Has Left The Mother". (PSH)

Stream may be a relic of habitual pil-proppers and newly released cassette laws, but it's been a long time since it produced a half-decent drop song. **Dope & Glory** (UnUSQ295 2CD), on the other hand, follows on from the German archive label's great *Flashbacks* #1: High & Low, Drag Songs from last year with 50 songs from the 1930s and 40s devoted to Texas Tex. The salacious pop and airy humour of nearly all of these swinging reeler tracks (made after the FBI and police shut down Harlem's 1200 hash bars) by such jukes as Mezz Mozzow, Fats Waller, Harlan Lathrop, The Harlem Harlequins, Cab Calloway, Sidney Bechet, Frankie "Half Pint" Jaxon, Jazz Gilpin and The Cedar Creek Club Band, among many others, is perhaps the best argument against the Islamisation of drug laws there is (PSH)

It would be easy enough to dismiss director Wes Anderson as irritatingly precious for lumping the following artists together on the soundtrack album for his tale of cerebral child prodigies, **The Royal Tenenbaums** (Hollywood 206102347 CD). No, Bob Dylan, The Ramones, Nick Drake, The Velvet Underground, The Yeses Quartet (Ravel's *Symphony in F Major*), neglected multitalent pop avant-garde Phish and The Vince Guaraldi Trio (sounding like Rascals cartoon lives there). Fortunately, the director corroborates his working relationship with Drew Johnston Mark Mothersbaugh who scored Anderson's first two releases, *Butter* and *Rushmore*. Using much the same tone palette (colleste, harpsichord, brushed trap set) and holding his own penchant for knowing humour in check, Mothersbaugh nails both the children's book whimsy and the dashed hopes at the core of this remarkable film. Though Anderson's success has earned him a music budget sufficient to obtain the best of his own record collection for screen use, none of the licensed music is anywhere near the potency of Mothersbaugh's original themes. Hardly devoted and works apart from the composer's other film-oriented work, his music is, by turns, gossamer light and as rakely as Raymond Scott. (RH)

The French Audio Suspension label's inaugural compilation, **Variable Access** (Active Suspension AD1 CD), collects a duology array of styles, ranging from electroacoustic improv to happy-go-lucky digital shaggy, and introduces several names worth watching. Echoes of brand name experimental pop can be heard, but nothing feels derivative: Sherrin's grooved "Jo Me Marques" begins with French's stratted growl but gradually morphs into a stick-noodle organ figure. Domestics "Some Things To Be Aware Of" When Mastering Digital Audio" might read like an early OAD title, but its careful overlay of skips and plannish melodies depicts a Romantic sensibility akin to most club + cuts music. Across the Ozuko and Enore we descend to post-rock modals, while Olanem and Deane Muvale apply a gleefully satirical approach to digital collage. (PSH)

Frankfurt's Baum...Muzik, home to artists like Dub Taylor and D.Oggit, has been behind quality Tech-House releases for several years now, but on the label's latest compilation, **Presentment #4** (Baum...Muzik MUSIK029 CD), you can't help but feel that something has got to give. Individual tracks have their merits — Dick Harris's "Output" yields a funky, offbeat bassline to the standard boom-bass pattern, and Dub Taylor's "Gee-Isen" was ruff down with a drible of filtered glitches — but the overall sense is a style that's been cornered and can't find its way out. The battery, two-chord waltz is the

most obvious culprit, but no one seems able to shake it. Licht & Scherbin's jaunty "Yea" is the lone exception here, but as a Rhodes-driven, Deep House cut, it doesn't exactly suggest a way forward. (PSH)

The same can be said of **Alena Latine: Electroacoustic Music From Latin America** (Linn LINT113 CD). Wager depicting Meyerbeer's extravagant operas as "effects without causes", and the electroacoustic effects that dominate these compositions from the last decade seem equally unmotivated. "Gate's Rife" for marimba and electroacoustic sounds by M. Rosas Cobian "represents the composer who goes out on a mild through the musics and images of his many lives" — but unfortunately forgets to create any meaningful order from them after their return. Many of the contributors, though born in Latin America, have moved to Europe. Agustín Farrandier is one of these, and his tape piece, "Silent Towers", is one of the more successful, revealing the easy pursuit of effects. The brief "sonorous landscapes" of Gabriela Ortiz "Five Micro-Escapes" each treats to a specific musical question, again in a thanklessly color way. But nothing here leaves you with the impression that Latin American studies are bursting with electroacoustic inspiration. (WH)

It's not all doom and gloom from the Southern Hemisphere, however. The artists collected on **New Zealand Scene Act Vol 1** (University Of Waikato UNWMD101 CD) at least manage to reconcile order and taste. Daniel Bebban's "Henriettes" is the most self-cannibal piece here collaging grunts, moans and dropped barbles from weightlifting events. "Henriettes" successfully evades both the standard palette of electroacoustic composition and any hint of toilet humour noise. Elsewhere, Kit Powell creates an opined portrait out of live recordings from a metal bandy, while Craig Serjefew builds a house of mirrors out of suspended recordings of birds and the London Underground. (PSH)

Dust of the academy and into the bedroom, **Far Friends** (Tombak Audio 02) and **ADRO40/TOM015 CD** collects the wistful electronic scribbles and diary entries of bedroom producers the world over. Most of the album is comprised of tiny, fragile, often banished electronics, suggestive of lonely westends and bad childhood memories. It's all very nice and unassuming in a cute will flower end of way, but the standout track is "Geminio Disco" by London's Livin' Son, something like Ode & Neutrons in dub, sung by your autistic four year old niece. (PSH) *Reviewed by Ben Barthwick, Andy Hamilton, Richard Henderson, Peter Shapiro and Philip Shestume*



LEO RECORDS

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LEO RECORDS NEW RELEASES



CD LR 334
PANDELLIS KARAYORGIS / MAT MANERI QUINTET
DISAMBIGUATION

Mat Maneri and Pandelis Karayorgis lead a quintet featuring an impressive line-up of some of the most creative musicians working in New York today. Tony Malaby on tenor sax, Michael Formanek on bass and Randy Peterson on drums. In the liner notes Kevin Whitehead writes: "Disambiguation" succeeds on that rarest level where compositions, orchestration, improvising strategies and individual talents all work toward a unified affect. ... This is what jazz should be like at the dawn of its second century: deft and complex without making a big fuss over either quality."



CD LR 335
STEVE COHN
THE BLAIR RECORDINGS

On his second CD for Leo Records, Steve Cohn, the man who has been called "the great hidden secret of American jazz," goes it alone. He has his collaborators Blair Herdman and Johnny De Robertis on a couple of tracks, but on the rest of the CD he is on keyboard with multi-track overdubbing, shakuhachi, hichiki, shofu, percussion. He also improvises his crazy monologues while playing an instrument. Totally original and unique.



CD LR 336
MATTHEW WELCH
CELO, NUA

A debut recording by the incredibly talented young composer/conductor/instrumentalist and Anthony Braxton's pupil and collaborator Matthew Welch, who writes oboes and symphonies for bagpipe and orchestra and performs them with Janacek Conservatory Orchestra in Czech Republic. His Symphony of Drones has been recorded at the Wazlawy University by an orchestra of fifteen musicians who are the next generation of stars of new music: Jackson Moore, Steve Lehman, Chris Jonas, Rees Archibald, to name just a few.



CD LR 337
LAUREN NEWTON / JOELLE LEANDRE /
URS LEIMGRUBER
OUT OF SOUND

This CD has been in the making for a long time. Everything should have been right: the ambience, the mood, the sound, the studio, etc. And at last it happened. As Francesco Martinelli writes in his notes: "They will burn junk music away from your ears, tear apart your idea of music and rebuild it again in a different shape... Thanks to Lauren, Joelle and Urs for giving us a chance to accompany them in their quest, and for setting us on our own."

foreground organ and gaily Residents-style vocals (Toupet's Lomax), children's percussion, and even intimated Easy Listening melodies (Klimper), who contribute no fewer than six tracks, as well as a collaboration with Biedlin). The collection also includes oddball sorcerer blues by the duo Oedipus, and the pulsating, This Heat-like live recording from Les Beteries is one of the set's rare dark moments.

French jazz-rock genius Albert Mancouer presides the sleeve notes, but alas, no musical contribution, and the CD booklet is completed by illustrations from Moulins, Paquito D'Rivera, Caroline Sury and Wyatt Wyatt: also makes the compilation's only explicit political reference, reworking his pro-Pakistan tune "Dondestan" to protest the war in Afghanistan. "Afghanistan's a country, or at least used to be." Difficult to imagine Leo Music raising much money, but the cause is worth supporting, and the music is a must for Francophiles.

VARIOUS NOT NECESSARILY "ENGLISH MUSIC"

EMERSON/ROCK MUSIC JOURNAL
EMPHASIS 2000

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Composer Nicolas Collins has edited a test issue of *Leonard Music Journal* that addresses currents in British experimental music between 1960 and 1977, and he invited David Toop to compile this audio anthology. Toop was extremely active in diverse areas of music during the latter half of that period, yet he is a cautious curator, wary of the paradox of conserving the exploratory and alert to the perils of subjective bias and faulty recollections. On the other hand, he recognizes that a lot has subsequently grown from that fertile and inadequately documented phase of musical investigation. Michael Nyman's book, *Experimental Music* (first published in 1974), mapped out significant parts of the picture, accounts of free jazz and improvising have added others. Toop adjusts the perspective and highlights some contemporaries.

Familiar coordinate points appear as well as long-submerged features. *MMJ* are heard at the Royal College of Art in 1965, a judiciously chosen track illustrating the group's creative use of silence, when looms tangibly into the room. There's disparate ensemble work by Michael Nyman's Campello Band, The Scottish Orchestra, Spontaneous Music Ensemble (including Toop), the strangely overlooked People Band, electronic groups Intermodulation (featuring composers Roger Smalley and Tim Souten) and Gentle Fire (including instrument maker Hugh Davies), a jazz outfit led by guitarist Mike Cooper and two featuring drummer Frank Perry with Chris McGregor on piano and trumpeter Mongezi Feza. Toop is heard playing electric guitar alongside drummer Paul Brunell as always with sound poet Bob Cobbing, and as free rock duo Rain in The Face. He has retrieved the sounds of Max Eastley's sculptures, idiosyncratic and oddly present performance by Steve Beresford, too improving by guitarist Peter Cusack and clarinetist Simon Mayo, solo spots by Hugh Davies and Frank Perry, and a free sampler of Ltd. Cadell's work with partner Steve Miller. There's a duet for one-stringed banjo and water cistern by emslike Paul Flood associated Nori Gerson, a glimpse of BBC Radiophonic Workshop pasteurizer Daphne Gray in

action, a peculiar recording of Cornelius Cardow accompanying soprano Jane Manning at the Puckett Room in 1974, lush piano maximalism from Robert Wyatt, and rawaged electronics from Raulshap Glaville. Only two tracks are available elsewhere on CD: an improvisation from Derek Bailey's *Solo Guitar Volume 2* (Jonus), and a solo by drummer John Stevens which has surfaced on *FMJ's* Improvising Percussionist compilation.

The selective archival's task is neither like turning round to stare torchlight down a gloomy corridor. A few meaningful features are picked out but a lot is left hidden. That's one of the inherent imperfections of such a project but it's equally a flaw of well established histories. This anthology, without setting upon anything so nebulous and convenient as a zinecast, testifies to nearly two decades of lively and varied musical research. Due to technological limitations, the custody of some recordings is less than pristine. Still, the music filters through and conveys a shared belief that something different and worthwhile could be brought into the world. Obviously musical research didn't simply cease with the onset of Thatcherism. It persists despite current orthodoxy that everything that matters already exists, waiting to be packaged seductively and assigned its proper place in a league table. The music on *Not Necessarily "English Music"* will, with clarity and often raw sound, affirm the necessity of curiosity.

VARIOUS UNKNOWN PUBLIC: TALKING DRUMS

UNKNOWN PUBLIC UP12 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Versatile British percussionist Paul Davis is guest editor for the last edition of the audio line *Unknown Public* to appear in a brown cardboard box before it's replaced by a CD/book format. *Talking Drums* deals with percussion not just as a groove foundation, but as melodic dissonance — as it does in Davis's own still understated work. UP12 opens with Moondog's rick, enchanting "Viking I," from the album *Moondog in Europe*, with Louis Hardin also Moondog on percussion and celesta. The more ambitious "Phases Of A Memoir" by Alex Chilton Ensemble is an eventful, imaginative exploration of percussion and vocal sonneries from his 1999 Cryptogramophone album. Its delicate, folk-inflected chamber jazz is dedicated to the late pianist Richard Greaves.

Brian Fennelly's wonderfully titled *Bone Ashes* features seven solo percussion played by Stephen Schick. In contrast, the Claxton Trio's whimsical version of "My Bird Of Paradise," is an affectionate subversion, rife with bird noises, of the Irving Berlin song from their *Rain And Sleet* album. Manuel Wondy was born in France, but spent his childhood and adolescence in Cameroon. Conceived as a march for a dance group, his haunting "Urban Steps," from *Rhythms Of Life*, mixes hip-hop beats with high register peapods to set up an encounter between urban industrial sounds and African rhythms. Tenko and Ivo Mer's sparse "Death Mask" for electronic percussion and voice is another delight. Acade from Edgar Varèse's *Ionisation*, which is too well known to surprise here, this edition presses one of the most unified and reworking UP concepts, moaning pioneering percussion works as well as exposing the obscure and under-explored. □

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Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other mishaps

Three inches of pressure: Butch's *Phlo* and Hot Air's *Sometime Ladies* (wearing hats).

Avtar are a young New Zealand quartet comprised of a drum kit, two organs and a turntable. I've been led to understand that some of their work is extremely danceable, but such is not the case with *Freezeover/Collective March* (Crawlpace Artist Series 3.1 B"). Although both tracks cleave to central rhythmic motifs, neither of them is offensively beat-oriented, and they unspool their sound in a way that is much too spacey for most (if not all) groovy-sound shufflers to follow. This is very much in the loopy experimental tradition of Crowdfunder's earlier Artist Series, and would make an excellent addition to any respecting shelf of B" labels (BC).

According to the notes, the sounds on **Joe Coley/Crowd Unit's** *Clay Sound* (Museum Music MW020 7") were generated from a bucket full of ceramic clay absorbing water. These notes go on to add that there was no subsequent manipulation of the sounds, but it's hard not to be a little skeptical, especially when the record's on a label as genuinely whacky as this one. Still, Coley's reputations and previous recordings have reamed all over the map without a hint of procedural scandal, so perhaps we should take him at face value. What this new record actually sounds like is a collage of looped beats generated either by sequencers or field recordings, slowly decaying in the reverbey snarl. Significant of its sound source, the single is pretty much diffuse noises rubbing against the edges of your near future like a pair of too tight whips (BC).

Emgen Yr Unn Aft/Agave (Genshapingwerk GW14/K002 7") on which **Multer** propose to locate the dot of pop music nadymodes, is a bit more engaging than some of their hoser form shifts. On the A side, their pillaging gives the proceedings a more manic edge than one expects from them. On the B side, things are more languidly atmospheric, allowing guitar shapers to surge slowly against the foreground in a way that may or may not be a tribute to the late Florian Fricke (although it's really done in a style that probably owes more to Manuel Göttschew, BC).

David Spangola's 2 1/2hrs OPA Travel (Orchid III CIMP02) contains five pieces by Robert Carey, presented in a most tedious format. Despite the presentation, the stuff here is daisies: Orchestral brain-popping hops between telephony-defined realities, done in daisies telephony style. I assume that this was actually achieved with contemporary technology (sampling, and so on), but as heart is still made of pure glue, and it is a raw thrill to hear new work from a stalwart first introduced to Europe via the venerated Nause With Wound list (BC).

Peter Scan has become known over the past

few years as one of the leading lights of the Scandinavian and folk underground, as the tuggish features of *Passover River Is Her Heart/None And Forsaken* (Chromelle 001 7"). The debut single by his current group **Paspale**, is something of a surprise, albeit a pleasant one. Paspale's sound is crude, with an effervescent lysergic dimension that gives their garage fever an aura of credibility that so many of their peers lack. The Hask Williams cover on the B side might seem like an odd choice, but it's played as a tongue-twisting, sad-eyed ballad in a way that would have done the Painted Ship proud (BC).

Random Number's side of the split *It's Time Honey/River* (Fencing Ratamoon FR0 7") is a fast scrambled mess, mounds of beat rapidly colliding with smirch, hanging slices of space detox fluid, and vocals speed mumbled into late night gales. **Straight Outa Bengalia's** track collapses (or is that collapsing?) electronic constructions with fast some blasts and a voice that sounds like it comes from a tree. Heard in these small snippets, the music seems like it would be about perfect for some sort of weed, underground party, but I'm far from sure that it's not funny (BC).

Nike Rap & The Oldies are one of those most mysterious groups whose germination point is in the pre-dawn of the American punk boom. Similar in certain ways to The Electric Eels, the Lone Wolves from Ikt, the Screaming Mac Mees and Destroy All Monsters, The Quads vomited up a riotous blend of style regulations that hinted at the post-Ramones mania to come. Using 60s punk as a stylistic base, this Columbus, Ohio group recorded their manual assault on eight-track cartridges, and it is a real treat to hear it a quarter century hence on *Mama Was A School Diddy Hiss A Vegetable Man/Rocket Music On* (Old Age Svenge Age 003 7"). wearing its warps on its sleeve, and beckoning for all to go enter a vortex of nada from which there is no escape (BC).

Snapper's *Himmerdahl/Oh Spot* (Crowdfunder CIMP010 7") contains two live tracks from a great wall-of-stuff New Zealand group that haven't released a new record in so long that it's presumed them to be extinct. Instrumentally comparable to Australia's Scientists at their most moonlike, Snapper's sound is a huge headrush of suicidal music produced by two overlaid guitars, a machine-driven organ, and the Neuf' like pulsing of drummer Mike Dooley (who long ago chased New Zealand's legendary Tony Lowe). The vocals exist in a rambled echospace beyond the beat of tongues, and the whole is as wet as a moath (BC).

Say No (Loegh Recordings LB7008 3" CD) is

a very interesting, extremely minimal collection of works by the Chicago-based sound artist **Adam Sondenberg**. There are some collaborators on portions of this, but it is seems genuinely the result of Sondenberg's thinking about Caplan sonic dicta. The sounds explored are those of civilization's natural environment, empty rooms, electricity statics and cyclic hums. This little CD doesn't really deal with any radically new themes, but it handles the ones it chooses with a beautiful clarity of vision (BC).

Hiking/Thong (Rotop-Bog IB-B00008 7") is another lovely, happy electronic record by **Hobokaze Takemura**, best known for his marriages of beats and bleeps. As with the work he records under the moniker Chie's View, this material shares a naive quality with the music of Bob Happersing or Coo Coo Rocker Time, but unlike the work of those artists (whose material is underlaid with a scarcely defined but definitely taggible darkness), Takemura's staff has a sureness that is difficult to overwhelm. Which may be good (BC).

Mama You Beant On My Mind/Pine Tree (Avalard Sidee AWMKARD10 7"), a split single that pairs Dave Papa's **Papa N** with UK post-rockers **Unhaine**, is indeed a marriage made in heaven. While Papa awkwardly echoes his way through a perfunctory piano-led take on Bob Dylan's mammoth "Mama, You Beant On My Mind", a track positively drenched in 1964's *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, Unhaine's "Pine Tree" shamelessly licks Papa as it catenates his instrumental work with both Siant and Tortoise. Nice concept (BC).

The Poly Shang Kun Band/Smack Music 7's untitled debut on Esteate Peace (ERB3d 7") presents two of Karen Constant's (aka Karen LoLyppa) tape music experiments. While not many people will recognize her as the wife and collaborator of Pink Decay's Dylan Ngouais, her approach to sound is every bit as conceptually lured as her husband's. The Poly Shang Kun Band seems her working with one Cecilie Gilbert, manipulating to reign language out-cuts in a style that's every bit as disturbing as Robert Ashley's language pieces, while Smack Music 7 presents a more textual approach, with drags, blooming computer assets and repeating cartoon loops that create a satisfyingly sick sound space (BC).

Wherever troubled songwriter **Daniel Johnston** hooks up with a group, the warning signs inevitably go off. Johnston always sounds best alone, whether weeping into a piano or struggling with heartbreakingly gay guitar chords, but *Svening Is Easy* (Headline Egg EG33 7") works fine, teaming Johnston with a guitar, bass, drums and synth trio who travel by the name of **Slow Death**. *Vis The Instant Coffin*. The title track features a distraught vocal from Johnston, as usual

despairing over nuclear rivalry and the inevitability of death to the accompaniment of some fairly generic indie rock. "Prayer From The Depths" is a bit noisier with rumbling, distorted bass bolstering his pleas for beautiful women, cigarettes and deliverance from others (BC).

The New Zealand free noise trio of bassist Kim Peters, guitarist Bruce Russell and drummer/noise operative Peter Stapleton, **Peters/Russell/Stapleton**, have previously out two ragged, form-debusting CDs, *Iron Glass* on Corpus Heteromusic and *Say/Invisible* on Melchior. *Cold Sweat/Max Sings* (Elastic Tod #046/PYS14 7"), a limited edition single released as part of Byron Coley and Thurston Moore's Just Another Ash Run series, provides a focused blast of their often ferocious live power. "Cold Sweat" is a glowing outburst from Say/Invisible, a static, teeth-clenching drone, while "Max Sings" features the gleefully untrained vocals of Bruce Russell's son Max. Unhinged in thrum as the two make with some of the heaviest rock moves of their careers (DK).

1951 **Somerset Ladies Wearing Hats** (AK Outlawed By Government (shot Art AR0055SR006 3" CD) is credited to Oberg Uguu and Jaiin Bunt, but you don't need to listen to the foreground garden cut-ups to realize that this is the work of **Matt Ward**, not two Irishians creating an "homage" to those strong-willed women who chose to risk death in enforcing new ideas and forms from outside their culture." The pointless cover art (featuring, er, Somerset ladies wearing hats) and brilliant post-late deconstructs should tell you all you need to know. A long overdue nod to the earnestness of World Music, and field recording and folk preservation artists (BC).

Another beautiful package, **Bulbut's** *Velv* (Trost 80789 3" CD) is a collection of sounds made by boyries and subsequently fashioned into five upturned clickscapes. But Bulbut not being *Katwalk* and this being no "De France", the usual problem with such projects applies—lacking any kind of sonic reference, these sounds could just as well have been created by anything—but most vexing is that too much of this 3" is reminiscent of "Right Of The Turnbuckle" as composed for a symphony of Max patches (PS). Despite the presence of Nause-with-wound queen **Marlene Krauss** on *Man Beant Be Baum* (Mama OB 3" CD), Stefan Ferdeus aka **Pete** is up to his usual tricks. Although there are no crackles and the synth/melodic background could be from a Vince Clarke remix of Gox, the dark elements are as radically structured as anything he's done since his first album. It makes you wonder why Pete's not more in demand as a balled producer (PS). Reviewed by Byron Coley, David Keenan and Peter Shapiro.

The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound

Get your pe-yé out: Brigitte Fontaine

Think of French female vocalists of the 60s and eras of bubblegum yé-yé cuties like Sylvie Vartan, France Gall and Françoise Hardy inevitably come to mind. Looming at the tail end of the yé-yé movement, and representing just about everything it seemed to negate, was a singer who may well have been the strongest default vocalist not to have come out of the blues/great tradition. Although she's been active since the late 60s, the extraordinary

Brigitte Fontaine is not only now being discovered by adventurous neo-Francophiles — a process which should be accelerated by the issue of four of her albums from the 60s and 70s Her 1968 debut, *Brigitte Fontaine Est...* (Savannah SHL1011 CD), was arranged by Jean-Claude Vannier, the musical brains behind the foundation stone of European psych-funk. Serge Gainsbourg's *Histoire De Melody Nelson* featuring a restrained Fontaine, *Brigitte Fontaine Est...* is not quite as groovy as Gainsbourg's masterpiece, yet it contains some remarkable music, warped congas meeting Marjorie clamping on "Emmelle", some offbeat proto-Bern moments on "Corinne Rimbaud", and Fontaine resuscitating a forgotten jazz arrangement on "Le Beau Cancer". Her legend largely derives from her neat album, *Corinne à la Radio* (Savannah SHL1016 CD). Recorded with The Art Ensemble Of Chicago and her longtime collaborator, Anselmo Belvismo, in 1970, *Corinne à la Radio* is quite simply sui generis. Fontaine spends much of the album evoking her Rimbaud-like lyrics in a variety of voices (serenely, detached, positively Medea-like) against a sparse backdrop of congas or unaccompanied bass. Unlike *The Last Poets*, say, these aren't the drums along the Mohawk declaring war on the oppressors, but simple textures that both frame and work with her awkward intakes and phrasing. When howling horns or ethnic instruments enter the mix, they haunt the background like djinns. Recorded in 1973, Fontaine's fourth album, partly credited to Anselmo, *Je Ne Connais Pas Cet Homme* (Savannah SHL1010 CD), is almost as good. The horns have largely been replaced by wailing strings and flutes, the guitars and Maybhe percussion take a leading role, and though some of the arrangements wouldn't be entirely out of place on a James Taylor album, this is still challenging, heady stuff. *Anselmo* and Fontaine sound like Caroleo Vesselo and Cal Costa duetting as the world explores around and on "C'est Normal", "Dis-Moi" is like one of Henri Rousseau's rainforests erupting into sound, and "Au Moment" could be a "Dueling Soundtracks" between Bernard Hermann and Elmer Bernstein. 1977's *Wus Et Vous* (Savannah SHL2077 CD) begins with a rail-like vocal

arrangement over a mathematically Minotaur before breaking into a six minute anti-patriarchy diatribe on top of the kind of overbearing synth-funk you'd find on a 70s porno soundtrack. Anselmo then takes centre stage with Britton sailors' ballads affronted with sparse guitar and bender arrangements and songs about central eating habits. (PS)

"Wobulous, absurd, disgusting" is how Algerian gun runner Arthur Rimbaud described his earlier career as a poet. **Richard Hell** might deserve his surname from Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*, but he has never disparaged his own contribution to the invention of punk's nihilism and distressed T-shirts as popularised by Johnny Rotten. *Blank Generation* remains Hell's claim on posterity, but *Time (Matador OLES30 2XCD)* makes a worthwhile footnote. It's essentially New York cassette label Rai's *RIP* mop-up compilation devoted with a 1977 recording of *The Waddlers* live plus extra tracks. Among the three tracks from Hell's still with Johnny Thunders's recent Heartbreakers in 1975 is their early version of "Love Comes In Spurts" which reveals how the band's association of love with premature ejaculation, its subversive stock clearest, came later, so to speak. The Heartbreakers' version marks a mid-point between the hardcore mania of Iggy Pop and Rotten's fascinated repulsion of the physical. The remainder of the double set, with the exception of a 1983 version of "The Juggs" ("I Can Only Give You Everything", features Rotten Queen's guitar, which is reason enough to listen. The single explicated by Queen and Hell is the live set from London's Music Machine in 1977 reminds you why sets only lasted 20 minutes in those days. Hear how "Lain Behave" opens with squalls of noise and feedback before hurtling into a rearguard wailing of guitar chords. The tracks from the 1978 benefit for the St Marks Poetry Project are sedate by comparison, the urgency tragically drained. Highlights of the studio material are: early takes of songs that ended up on the second Volsade album, *Deziny Street*, the Dylan-yet "Time" and a cover of Dylan's "Going Going Gone". Both read like retirement fables. (DW)

By 1979, Germany was already crumbling by popular by others. Between leaving DAF and joining *Orb Plan*, electronics player *Di Zehle* aka **Pyrolator** created a fine solo debut, *Inland* (Ato Tat W179 CD). If its instrumental structure and title suggest Pyrolator was reformulating punk protest as voluntary mental exile, his evocative pre-Ambient impressionist snapshots argue otherwise. Recorded on an early Korg MS20, his synth-drum and sequenced metallic time poems, spiced with snatched voice tapes, articulate punk's euphoric sense of its own

empowerment disappearing in the acid rain of German reality, in the wake of the previous autumn's terrorist cell deaths, nuclear protests, Cold War fears... By definition generative music seeds its own regeneration, and Pyrolator himself soon joined up the mood with his *Headphones* funded to follow up. *Ausland* (884 Current 93's Live At Star Matador (Turbo 001 CD) isn't really a live album; rather, it's a huge collage piece, assembled from the amber glow of choral synthesizers, choruses of pianoing and mile-long drones, all rendered waltz-like in Steve Stapleton's studio treatment. More formless and less focused than the preceding *Dog's Blood Rising*, it's still a fine example of early Century's sound art phase, which reached its peak with 1985's *In Mensch/No Night*. It's an early edition in a redesigned digipack featuring the earliest of David Tibet's chalk paintings: Tibet was battling a life-threatening illness during the recording of *Current* 93's 1986 album, *Imperson* (Distro 008 LP). At the time he believed it would be his last. As a result it's one of his most poignant sets, his dissection over death and judgment is given a lustrous, acoustic setting. The new vinyl edition looks and sounds gorgeous. (GW)

Following years of silence from *Lulus*, the post-punk solo led by artist Under Sterling and guitarist Ian Devine, come some noisy signs of activity. First last year's requiem, *Cler Eastwood*, *Come Offences And Me*, and now *The Damage* (JUN LMC22328 CD), a compilation of Lulus's first moments and a timely reminder of the art-punk angst within which they worked. Presenting songs culled from their three albums and various 12"s from 1979-83, the stylers shift this way and that, but settle down to angular guitar patterns. Sterling's lyrics are more often declamatory than sung — all the better to fully let the subversive impact of their harpison harmonium "Little Girls" might dress as if it as a prototype of *Altered Images* pop pos, but its message — "Wake up! Shake up! — is a call to power. (GW)

Jay Clayton & **Jerry Granelli**'s *Sound Songs* (Winter & Winter JWW Edition 919006 CD) is the sort of thing that Clayton, who started out as a jazz singer, has now come to specialise in. The duo format evidently appealed to her — her most recent return to jazz material was the marvelous *Beautiful Love* with pianist Fred Hersch. That 1996 album showed her to be a fine interpreter of a lyric, but she doesn't have a conversationally beautiful voice, and is first and foremost an improviser. These "sound songs" from 1985 don't feature too many grooves, and only two tracks have lyrics. "Goodbye Pink Pie Herd", Charles Mingus's lament for the death of Lester Young, but these words don't do justice to the beautiful melody, and a wonderful adaptation of Emily

Dickinson's poem "I'm Nobody". Jerry Granelli is unceasingly sympathetic, his masterly support on drum kit and 'cello percussion overcoming any feeling of sparseness. Extraordinary. (AH)

During the 90s, **Herb Robertson** became overshadowed by Dave Douglas as the leading New York downtown trumpet player, if he only released a few CDs under his own name that decade, the 80s were a different story when he got to make a string of excellent albums for JMT. The 1985 set of Robertson compositions, *Transparency* (Winter & Winter JWW Edition 919002 CD), might be short on the transcendence that it is, say, his recent *Music For Long Afternoon Spans* (LNU), where his playing is explosive and flamboyant, and swooshes. Tom Berne's unrecognisable compared to the discordant play he's become, offering some of the most lyrical, rhapsodic playing of his career. But the understated effect is partly down to the recording, whose low sound levels lack strong presence. Bill Frisell, Lindsay Hornor and Jeff Bannister — displaying remarkable control of widely fluctuating tempos on the bagpipe "Rascals" — complete an excellent line-up. (AH)

The boss von de Ribbles, the Giorgio Trouman of the woodier, **Roger Troutman** was tragically killed on 25 April 1999 in an apparent murder-suicide by his brother Larry. Unfortunately, his legacy lives on only in the welter of chart hits containing wadded vocals, used simply to make the singer's prodigious lack of talent. We Can Make You Dance, The Zapp And Roger Anthology (Warner Bros/Rhino B12278344 2XCD), however, seems to redress the balance with two discs of the baddest talkback and handclaps ever recorded. Troutman and his group Zapp hit the public consciousness with the eternal "More Source To The Dance", recorded under the auspices of Warner Chertin in 1980. As this excellent collection shows, though, the group had already recorded some very fine straightforward funk as Roger & The Human Back, but their records barely made a dent of their hometown of Cincinnati. However, their Parliament-styled, futuristic funk jams are what everyone remembers them for, and the classics like "Be Alright", "So Ruff", "So Tall", "Dance Floor" and "Computer Love" that Or De raded to create the G-Funk blueprint are here in all their glory. If you want to get deeper into de mysteries of talkback, Troutman's solo album, *The Many Facets Of Roger* (Warner Bros/Rhino B12278329 CD), containing his amazing/preposterous cover of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine", has also been reissued. (PS) [Reviewed by Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, David Nelson, Bob Apat Peter Shapiro and Dan Watson]

Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

THE APES THE FUGUE IN THE FOG FRENCHKISS #9004 CD

Maya-laced Paris-based The Apes play organ-driven garage funk testimonials in the gospelized tradition of The Make-Up and The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. There are no guitars, just a lit backbones of organ and bass that thumps through a set of pounding ulupopo faunts. For their live shows the whole group reputedly dress up in combat fatigues. The Fugue In The Fog feels like a lightning strike, a breakneck run through 14 barely distinguishable tracks, with titles like "Apes Salute" and "Apes Theme." Although it's not as gloriously stooped as a first look, with a second spin revealing all kinds of tawdry new wave logic and Strangers baselines, the fact that these guys are so woefully foolish is to detract from the purity of their iconoclastic pursuit of the teenage party zone.

THE CIRCUS OF THE SCARS HOME IS WHERE THE HURT IS BETA LACTAM RING M7041 CD

The Circus Of The Scars are a duo who are obviously obsessed with the sidereal sound of contemporary folk as well as such tired apocalypse culture staples as The Process Church Of Final Judgment and Charles Manson. It's a shame that their subject matter should be so ruthlessly generic that it prevents you really sinking into their music, which more often than not is genuinely lovely. The spinning "Fledgling Song" sounds like something from C.S. Lewis's series, or an outtake from Backwards, as a beautifully ardent vocal phrases in and out over some synthpop keyboards. The fact that their studio work is nowhere near as advanced as Peter Christopherson's gives this a primitive art school edge that sounds a bit like Simon Wickham-Smith and Richard Young's LAKE, this time replete with tattoos and piercings. Yet despite effective use of schizophrenic cut-ups and some spacious instruments that recall The Legendary Pink Dots, as soon as the extended Manson samples kick in, it's just impossible to take this seriously.

NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY PLAYS THAT GOOD OLD ROCK AND ROLL DRAG CITY DC014 CD

Plays That Good Old Rock And Roll is Hagerty's second solo disc since splitting with Ryer Inc. Unlike his debut, which he recorded himself using wildly antiquated overdrives, he cut this with his touring group. Yet the tracks still feel insouciant, seeming to move through secular chimes rather than rocking in real time. In parts it sounds closest to Alex Chilton's *Like Fires On Shelter* in the way it mixes mingled roots music with a deliberately contrary sound style. While *Plays That Good Old Rock And Roll* isn't quite as mind-boggling as Chilton's magnum opus, there are certainly moments: "The Stern Song" serves up some Dixie-fied gospel that sees Hagerty almost turn to religion, while the opening "Gratitude" harks back to classic turn in the way that he simply takes a thoughtful

phrase (in this case "thanks a lot") and repeats it to parody one of the best things to have refusing on the true split work and it's splattered all over this disc in gory detail, with "Louise La Ray" taking the brunt of his ecstasy. Edith Frost, fresh from her Drag City Supersession with Hagerty, blends some Country vocals into the mix, but the way the occasional string arrangements just waft across the tracks as incongruous as a pair of net curtains.

KEIJI HAINO & TATSUYA YOSHIDA UNTIL WATER GRASPS FLAME NOESGIA HAINO CD

River drummer Tatsuya Yoshida has been teamed with Keji Haino before, though the documentary evidence is unfortunately thin on the ground and barely hints at the form that both players are capable of. The disc that Musica Transcend cut with Haino, *Incubation*, was such an awkward halfway meeting of styles that none of the parties had much room to really manoeuvre. While *Until Water Grasps Flame* is a much more focused and aesthetically varied set, it still feels frustratingly short of the pan-gonic blowout it might have been. As well as guitar and voice, Haino plays various acoustic ethnic instruments and it's when the duo move into more profound, donning areas that the set really takes off. Although the guitar and drum duels are as heavy as you could have hoped, they're disappointingly linear. Yoshida seems slightly closer, too eager to follow Haino's every change of direction rather than simply just singing out on his own. Still, the more meditative material serves as a fine palliative, especially the closing track where Haino draws little gasps of sorrow up from the bottom of his lungs while Yoshida sounds a broken heartbeats.

THE HOTOIGOTSU CUCKOO CLOUDLAND OESTIL NO NUMBER LP

Rumoured to be some kind of archival Japanese folk/drum album heavily influenced by avant thinkers like Takehisa Koguchi and The Byrds Travellers, Cuckoo Cloudland sounds much more like a Quebec to UK improvisers like SunnO and Vibroacathedral Orchestra. That The Hotoigotsu's first release was a limited CD on SunnO's Matthew Bower's Rural Electrician label would seem to confirm the Japanese tag as sound. The use of scowling string drones, clanking metal and silver bells gives this a lovely freefloating feel that sounds like some kind of medieval meeting between Neil Campbell's medieval clank and Bower's primitive take on exalted music, while the use of a cheap Casio tone gives it a punk edge. It comes wrapped in a silk-screened nice paper jacket in a limited edition of 100.

JOSHUA GOLD COSMOS PEACHER ONE'S NEST FORNOS CD

Joshua is a solitary musician based in Western Massachusetts who has been quietly amassing a

dismissive back catalogue that explores the furthest reaches of dimensionally transcendent folk music. When his last two releases were lo-fi and soul-baring in the extreme, Gold Cosmos is a more subtly arranged and layered affair, with Joshua's whooped entreaties sunk deep in an eerie delay that recalls the vibrant, delicated sound of Skip Spencer's *Gar*. Here his sound is further bolstered by contributions from members of Tower Recordings, Sex Organs Of Admittance and Dredd Foole. Despite Joshua's leanings towards British acoustic guitarists like Bert Jansch and Davy Graham, the extra layers of instrumentation matter it ends up sounding more akin to the housewifery of prime Pop! Vuh. The twilight atmosphere is further heightened by eerie swathes of sound that range from assorted wildlife to the garbled tongues of humans, making Gold Cosmos seem closer to some kind of intimate sound journal rather than "merely" a collection of acoustic songs.

K-SALVATORE THE COUNTERFEITER SNA SWAMP LP

K-Salvatore are another offshoot from the No-Nock Blues Band mothership, a fearless improvisatory ensemble whose releases are always gorgeously put together, with visuals and text that serve to complement and illuminate the songs within. The Counterfeiter is a particularly striking example and comes in a silk-screened foldout sleeve adorned with a painting of a dying Christ and a booklet of automatic poems. "Went Psychotic Breakfast" starts off the first side with a breathy, riveting flute sounding a stumbling primitive dance before the tape cuts to "The Dolphin", an extended section of clunking gong and percussion work that moves into territories previously conquered by Amen Dugul.

The second side works with comparatively more conventional forms, opening with "Bohemian Liberated Bloomery" which features the kind of detached acoustic jangling that the UK's Shadow Ring elevated to a fine art. "Solid" is much more dramatic, with word sounds like a squealing soprano laying liquid lines of squeal over droning bass and shuffling electronics, coming across as some kind of plugged in medieval feast.

SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE RICK RONTIDE HICK MOUNTAIN 1240 CD

Six Organs Of Admittance — the six versions plus the set, according to Buddhist scripture — is one Bert Chesney, a West Coast American whose droning, acoustic psychedelia feels like some kind of missing link between early hippy jammers like Tamaswara's Rex or The Third Ear Band and the steel string splendour of guitarists Les Kuttie and Robbie Basho. Chesney was previously a member of Plague Laughe whose *Wolfer Image* album, released in 1996, was a fine approximation of the sort of turn art generated by Japan's Fushibashi, but Six Organs Of Admittance work on a more intimate level. The opening "Spits Abandoned" is glorious, a

dramatic slow march led by howling, fingerpicked guitar and Chesney's ominously deep vocal. Although the later instrumental stuff feels lighter and more communal, it points giving the nod to Tokyo's Ghost or the fluffier side of Faust, the album's overall atmosphere is lost and elegant, a bleak postcard from the other side of nowhere.

SUNBURNED HAND OF THE MAN JAYBIRD MAN-AND NO NUMBER CD R

Sunburned Hand Of The Man are an over-evolving gang of multi-instrumentalists well versed in the many manifestations of contemporary American sound. Their roots lie way back in 1994 when as a trio they took on the name of The Sgt-Spangled Banner and released an LP as part of Thurston Moore and Byron Coley's limited Axis Run series. They have connections to The No-Nock Blues Band, with whom they toured throughout the States, and a couple of members turned up an NNCK's Live At Ker's Electric Lake and played at the NNCK off-shoot Egypt Is The Magic 4. Since then Sunburned's ranks have swollen to accommodate 15 players and their free, open-ended sound reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of their membership. Unlike their comrades in the NNCK, Sunburned's sound is more straightforwardly rhythmic with seeds of dub and bass patterns that lull like George Clinton while flares, phased electronics and tremulous voices take the sky. Still, the overall feel is of some kind of temporally misplaced folk orchestra taking great avant strides through the music of the mountains, and their long-standing relationship with grrrr folk traveller Harkin should give you some idea of the kind of beatry shock that radiates throughout.

SUNNO))) FLIGHT OF THE BEHEMOTH SOUTHERN LORD SUNNKS CD

SunnO))) are a demonic guitar/bass duo who deal in lumbering subsonic gusto. Their audio-cuddling minimalism is, in part, a tribute to Olympian Dylan Carlson's Earth project who, alongside Melvins, first joined the dots between Black Sabbath's metallic sludge rock and the slowly scorching sonic detail of hardcore minimalism. If anything, SunnO))) take this aesthetic even further with slow motion violence of steadily peaking crunch that easily coalesce into anything that could even pass for a riff. The opening track on *Flight Of The Behemoth* frolics with all the heavy gravity of a black hole as ultra-low tones with the potential to reconfigure your internal organs hang ominously in space. Also included here are two Meadow remixes, which see Meszari Akiba adding some desiccated piano and technobabble electronics that combine to create a scarily good *psy-frog*. The closing "FWTBT" seems they slightly accelerate on a riff that sounds like a rusty "I'm Man", and with a subtitle like "I dream of Lars Ulrich being thrown through the bus window of my master Mystikal Kiff Burton" it presents a scenario that we can all relate to. ☐

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

AARDVARK FIND THE COW

DELSON SABORINARI CD

For fans of the prewar middle ground between Detroit Techno and dry wire-picked HipHop, Mike Kowalski's debut album is the next best thing to a new Urban 'Ybe record. The Delson label occupies a kind of OMZ between Delou's IOM and Arhiv's broken beat, and Aardvark's album exemplifies the genre, straddling in its rounded, analogue pads and blown-speaker rattle. Find The Cow fuses the doleful chords of Black Runner to stuttering bass/snare patterns, synchronized to the point of dissolution. Only grinding tracks like "Steps" recall Rex's debut album, but are updated with richer production and vicerally clearer sound. All of the 23 cuts on the CD play out like variations on a single theme — a sketchbook full of charcoals of ominously overcast horizons.

AKUFEN QUEBEC NIGHTCLUB

PERLON PERLON 2X12"

Marc Leclaire's Perlon doublepack picks up where his work for labels like Background, Triper and Truam left off, with slicky MikeHouse rhythms that explode into a greyscale rainbow. What makes Akufen's style distinctive are his sources: most of the sounds come not from synthesizers or traditional sampling, but from snippets of radio-dial blur woven into a kind of pop-cultural glossolalia. On top of Leclaire's trademark lurching percussion and rubber-spined basslines, piquant R&B flashes interlock with busy announcer's grunts, orchestral stabs and the spinning static of interstitial frequencies. In a step sideways, Leclaire even finds an unexpected affinity with the minimalist Gange of labels like Shell Life and Tempus on "Brown Hissler," with a rhythmic poise precariously between staccato four-to-the-floor and two-step swing.

EL-B BUCK AND BURY/BACK TO ME

GHOST GHOSTA 12"

On "Back And Bury," MC Jooceman keeps it sparse, and hoarse, while El-B unleashes one of his darkest rhythms yet. You wonder if the ghost in question is the specter of Techstep, which

haunts the track in the restless snare, denim bass and the red-eyed relentlessness of it all. True to form for the late, wobblelike keyboard flourishes flash across upper regions of the track, offsetting the massive low end with an almost glassy fragility. "Back To Me" is nowhere near as ominous, as Antoinette sings yet another tale of a lover whose partner has slept with her best friend. Again, as on Shell Life's likeminded releases, wind tinkly piano figures counterpose the magma boss, a curious merger of R&B cheese and darkside menace.

HOLGER FLINSCH COLLAPSING NEW PEOPLE

PUNKT MUSIC PUNKT009 CD/2XLP

Flinsch's second album appears on the Raum. Musik-affiliated Punkt imprint, and while the record is clearly related to Raum's dubby, minimal Techno, it benefits from Flinsch's willingness to move away from the limited stylistic parameters of the form. The tracks here that new closest to the template are dark, swirly affairs shot through with crisp 4/4 rhythms — per for the course, but well executed nonetheless. Elsewhere, though, Flinsch dabbles in rhythms caked in static and loops delicate harmonies until they blossom into sparkling auras. Moving even further out, Flinsch experiments with a range of textures, the grainy analogue tones of vintage new wave, moody string passages and a host of vocal samples, looped until the words lose meaning. On his furthest excursion from dub Techno, he cobles together futes, horns and carnival drums into a lumbering conga line that falls somewhere between Thomas Brenkman's Soul Center project and the ecstatic House of the Alchemist series.

DI LOGIC THE ANOMALY

REPEADPE RE10004 CD

On his debut album, 1999's *Di Logic Presents Project Logic*, the New York turntablist established himself as the House Of the downtown set. On his latest album, however, Logic has largely abandoned the arty formalism for a more streamlined, crowdpleasing jam-band groove. While much of this sounds like Madsu, Martin & Wood playing with St Germain, the

tracks where he abandons the stale funk ("Frequency One"), "Miles Away," "Asteroid") really do sugar a bright, new future for turntable jazz. (Peter Shapiro)

NEW FLESH STICK N MOVE

BIG DADA B00035 12"

True to their Caribbean roots, New Flesh's take on HipHop has as much to do with reggae's lunging rhythms as it does classic New York boom-bap. "Stick N Move," fronted by the raucous chorus of Juice Alem, Toastie Taylor and Blackbude, sprays a sloppy Nordic bassline all over a clean, spacious break that's heavy on the swing. Rhythmically, the track's essentially a slowed down version of the "hyperdub" flavour of Garage currently advanced by outfits like South London's Homopower Productions — suggesting that a few celloviols down the line could spark provocative mutations between two already viable genres. "Understanding" is less pressured, both rhythmically and vocally, but the janky keyboards and drum machines make for an intriguing hybrid of electro and R&B.

REPLICANT RUMBA ROCKERS A RATHER INTERESTING MIX

NONPLACE NON008 CD

Punting off with "El Omi Momo," a serene little slice of cosmic topicalism from Selah Coconut, Burni Friedman has edited together a must-see street party in celebration of Atom Heart/Jive Schmidt's reconstructions of technologically advanced music for the socially minded. Working over the past decade under a self-effacing succession of aliases, Santiago-based Schmidt has created an intricate and handsomely troined out Techno hybrid that reveals in its own ardor. Authenticity isn't even an issue here: it's too busy trying to outdo dub's edits and overdubs with a springy sense of purpose to the whole affair, especially on the wailing, woozier excesses of "Florianopolis" and the faltering samba rhythms holding "All Notes Off" together. Other collaborators include Teku Inoue letting his hair down during the sherry "Stereo Kiss" and Lisa Carlson, featured on the floating and quirky "Congo" at the close of the set. (Ken Mallory)

VARIOUS SOME OTHER MISTAKES

SOUNDCLIKE B005 12"

Matthew Herbert continues to develop his Soundlike label as a platform for artists who share his own eclectic and unconventional vision. My Robot Friends' "Way Down" employs growling analogue synthesizers, a throbbing, overdriven bassline, and affectless blues vocals to suggest early 80s funk-punk. It's strikingly different from most releases on Soundlike, but given post-punk's political orientation, the reversion of the genre — part of a general re-examination, along with releases like Soul Jazz's *In The Beginning There Was Rhythm* — makes sense within the context of Herbert's own increasingly politicized work. The B-Bit Construction Set uses an obsolete Atari computer to create wobbly, unstable electro, thankfully free of romy B-Beggs' "Semi-Detached Utopia" draws together a Chicago House drum track and an unruly No Wave bassline, with jump cuts and slack loose glaze, and a welter of unexpected notes and textures. Herbert's own contribution — featuring his customary shuffle rhythms and an eerie chorus of hollow, shuddering tones, like a recording of excited doves played back at half-speed — is less frenetic, but no less exhilarating.

ANDY VAZ CLICKS, SOUNDS, VARIATIONS

2

1-1 SOUNDS VARIATION 2 2 CD

Backgrounds Records' Andy Vaz confirms his conceptual label [1-1] with two long tracks based largely on squelchers and clicks, while the conceptual underpinnings of a bit vaguer — as with each [1-1] release, it's based on "the use of the same sounds, re-used throughout the entire EP," begging the question of when isn't the case in computer music? — it's a pleasant departure from most clicks and cuts 4/4 tracks, while the steady pulse is still in full force. Vaz has made use of triplets and exponential, tumbling-down patterns, throwing everything just off kilter. Soundwise, he fleshes out the click-palette with a cold, drunken-rat range of squawks and beeps, like a sedated update of Don Bell's classic Acid as DBX.



Electronica

Reviewed by Jerome Maunsell

AGF/KYBORG CONSTANT VARIABLE I NEUE BERLINER INITIATIVE 004 13*

Documenting several live electronic events last year at the Neue Berliner Initiative club night, this is the first release in the "Constant Variable" series of EPs, which will pair off different individual artists with Kyborg. On these nine instrumental tracks, where Kyborg spars with Laub's Anje Grotz-Fuchs, the sonic aesthetic is ultra-minimal and austere, clipped and rigorous. Unrestrained drones weave on the occasional bassline or analogue blip, and rhythmic twirls along neurotically AGF provides a low brief iterations with wily-eyed melody on "Domagala" and "Dip Solo". The resulting sound elsewhere, paired to the bone with scaled-back economy, might be too dental for some. Loads of icy, parched funk, though, should find the next few installments in this series worth waiting for.

BABY FORD & THE IFACH COLLECTIVE SACRED MACHINE KLANG ELEKTRONIK 05 CD

Peter Ford has come a long way since the *Acidic days* of "Goodby Koschy" and "Chikie Chikie Ain't". After the *Blond* album, which was a startlingly ambivalent, and largely successful, attempt to redefine techno across a broad canvas of styles, he went deep underground, only occasionally coming into full view. On *Sacred Machine*, he's still hanging with the same crowd from the *Los Techno scene* — En, Mark Broom, Thomas Menckner — but the sound now takes the Zen-like, meditative focus of his *Black 12* to its logical conclusion, stirring in some of the cheery flavor of his Minimal Man releases. Did School drum machine programming over bass weights creates a dry, spare retro Techno funk. "Sea Pump" rocks idiosyncratically with a slightly off-key, characteristic piano loop. "Bad Friday" is uniquely moody, rain-soaked and windswept house music.

THE BLACK DOG & BLACK SIFCHI UNSAVOURY PRODUCTS HYDROGEN BUREAU/DUNKER CD

"What do people want to listen to?" asks performer artist and poet Black Sifchi at the opening of his collaboration with The Black Dog's Ken Downie. "Art? Communication? becoming nothing?" What is going on with our reality? Other provocative questions are spat out throughout this rambling mix of Sifchi's drawled spoken word and Downie's static electronics (which recall, and even reprise, some moments of 1990's *Spanners*). Apparently, *Unsaunary Products* is a tribute to William Burroughs, and was inspired by a collaboration with him in the months before his death. That album (which, we are promised, will eventually see the light of day) sounds fascinating. While these 20 short, concise tracks all suffer from a lack of rhythmic interplay between the voice and electronics, and run slightly out of steam over the course of the CD, there are some great moments here. "Dear Ray" ropes along like an

outtake from a Jim Jarmusch movie. "Mental House Hotline" makes Dr. Octagon sound like a frivolous clown.

CAPITOL K ISLAND ROW IX 30-147 CD

Kieran Craig Robinson's 1999 debut album as Capitol K, *Sounds Of The Empire*, on Mike Paradinas' Planet Mu label, had some blistering moments of Sonic Youth-style guitar noise amidst the more polite strummed songs and electronic whizzers. This rework of his second LP also confusingly titled *Island Row*, is his first release for XL and, as the press release tells us, "is to all intents and purposes, a brand new album." It's all endearingly melodic stuff, mashing up instrumentation and guitars with a swirling open-mindedness — sometimes sounding like a pop collision between the symmetry, more guitar-led moments of Mouse De Mars and a thousand indie groups of yesteryear. Nice jangle and more cut-up electronic and acoustic white noise would have been more satisfying to these ears, but the obvious restraint and songcraft on show here is likely to appeal to a much wider audience.

CASCO/NECHARTIER/ DEUTREE AFTER LPM 120013 CD

FRANK BRETSCHNEIDER & TAYLOR DEUTREE BALANCE MILLE PLATEAUX MP3/09 CD

SND
SND
MILLE PLATEAUX MP3/09 CD
A 21 minute improvised live laptop performance recorded at Montreal's *Musik festival* last year forms the basis of *After*, which also offers three new works from each of the artists, each composed long after the event, built only out of source material gathered at the gig. The whole disc is characterised by minutely focused microsounds which shift subtly, almost imperceptibly, around. Chartier's reconstructed "Amenage" is so subtle as to be virtually inaudible. Deutree, meanwhile, uses repetition to create a novel kind of laptop arrangement.

Deutree's collaboration with Frank Bretschneider, meanwhile, is more conventional: an almost unbearably pristine wall of hyper-clinic techno — all pure, past rhythmic and melodic lines which gradually gather a kind of glacial momentum over each individual track as various adroit elements coalesce around the central loops. All these neatly spliced cycles segue into each other, building along before another kill.

The 15 tracks on the latest release from Sheffield's *SND* are equally economical in style, fusing cut-up digital ambience with super-sparse rhythmic ruts and bops, but they acknowledge the old blueprints of the dominant dancefloor styles. At points, it feels like an arch deconstruction of the motifs of Garage and disco

— or House with most of the superstructure removed — before descending into some CD-slapping drones and clicks.

CURSORMINER THISMANSADVENTURE EP UNCHARTED AUDIO UNCHORD 13*

There's a schizophrane quality of styles on these six tracks from London based musician Robert Tuba. The title cut serves up impressively bombastic, jittery breaks straight from the Aphex/Squarepusher school of hyperactive beats, cut up with a host of samples culled from TV and who knows where else. "Before the adventure is to run the risk of dying up like a pie in a shell," intones a very British voice, as Tuba says true to his word with a slew of warped FX and bits and pieces playfully welded together in an anything goes manner reminiscent of *Synthesia* releases. "Virus" is tested, humorous stomping pop, mashing 80s synth lines over industrial strains and shouty new wave vocals with melodic suss and mischievous rhyme. "PopMusic" does the click thing at high speed before settling into an insanely distorted groove that will have you checking your needs for fuel!

GLOBAL GOON VATICAN NITEZ HEMLOCK CDTB 16

Global Goon's first releases had many mistakes for yet another one of Richard James's cases of pseudonym. Judging from his latest collection of tunes, it's not hard to see why. Many of these tracks share more than a little with early vintage Aphex Twin. "Business Man" could have come straight off *Selected Ambient Works 80-82*, with its flickering synth motifs and cut-up analogue warbles. "Diagnose" features a soothing wash of warm, melancholic tones over some straight-ahead, shuddering beats. What the Goon adds to the mix is a predilection for almost Prog overtones dangerously similar to Steve Hillage. This may no longer break much new ground, but it's a heap of fun all the same, and remains refreshingly unpretentious.

MASHITA 705 ZEN MANIFESTO QUARTERMASS 08109 CD

No shortage of quality samples on this odd slice of eclectica, adored on the cover by a kooky, kawaii-clad woman. Some of them are epic, string-laden chunks of pseudo-soundtrack music; others recall the atmosphere of old black and white French films. But there's been some fairly intense stretching and tweaking going on at some stage. Many of these tracks warp in and out of tune capriciously, mingled in the Akai like a chewed up cassette tape, giving you the queasy surreal feel of classic MBV. Excursions into beeping, clattering beats and bleeps characterise other tracks, punctuated with a raft of kitsch sonic curlicues. The album as a whole channels so many trends, so abruptly, that it seems to suffer from something of an identity crisis.

ROSY PARLANE GETXO SIGMA 010 CD

Four years after launching the Sigma label with #1-4, London based (and apparently male) New Zealander Rosy Parlane's latest album, written and recorded between April and October 2001, showcases a more intricate, less hi-fi sound. That said, the all-encompassing wave of distortion which slowly envelops the shivering Ambient repetitions of the first, awesome ten minute track "Ilesa" hardly seems like hairsplitting digital fiddling. Elsewhere, slowly evolving, calm phrases develop over oceans of liquified clicks, before morphing into something else entirely. The mood in general is somber, shimmering, subtle, and structured in a way that seems to have an organic, rather than artificial, logic. The closing track "Janka", another ten minute-plus opus, gets your skin crawling, with a fleet of undeniably electronic silvers and shades of needling and abrasive sound, before sliding into an ambience that hovers, then swells beautifully.

ALEXANDER RISHAUGH SMALLTOWN SUPERBOLDNO 070409 CD

Alexander Rishaugh hails from Trondheim, Norway, where he is a painter, photographer, curator, composer and part of the Electronic Improv the Am. This release from the ever-straggling Smalltown Superboldno is his debut solo album, and finds him joining the ranks of the laptop brigade with an idiosyncratic clutch of clicks, seeping rhythms, unpredictable structures, wistful melodic interludes and scrambled hard drive sequences. Much of this ground may be familiar, but there's a careful attention between chaos and predictability, fuzzy clicks, mildly overdriven, yet carefully nuanced shifting chords, and Oval-like uneasy ambience that makes this release gel.

ULTRA-RED/ANNA PLANETA SPLIT 12 FAT CAT 10841945 83*

Disent tins the dancefloor in the Two House tracks from Californian audio activists Ultra-red, which mix beats with site recordings made during street protests against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington DC on 15-17 April 2000. Whirling helicopter blades and the chopped-up chants of demonstrators are woven around a minimal, hypnotic groove on "A16", while the sounds and vocals of "7417" mix megaphone pronouncements, crowd noise, and conversations over a melodic chant. It's a worthy attempt to bring political engagement and protest to the often socially apathetic, hedonistic arena of House. On the flip, Anna Planeta contributes another two artfully arranged live recordings, but these are more suitable for home listening. "Good Morning, Gitter-Die" was put together from sounds "made and heard at a huge, long, abandoned Catholic school house near Alton Towers theme park". The results are more eclectic: all rattling cymbals, spooky drones, and sinister noises — an audio world where snapshot which is hauntingly effective. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

ABSTRACT RUDE AND FRIENDS HEAVYWEIGHTS ROUND IV/FAMILY AFFAIR BASEMENT RECORDS 12"

About a decade and dozens of dead dreams after the original meetings of Los Angeles's Project Blowed began, the pure black whirlwind reemerges for a new installment of the "every so often 'Heavyweight' posse jambores." J-Sneov inaugurates the madness ("We messin' a gem and got freestyle in our DNA") and introduces lead-off freshman Acelayne to "tuggle the Enlightenment out of the darkness." Zulu's trippy-hop shadowbombs the hi-hats and descends into a nearly unintelligible Ghetto-speak that wins this record's mixed award. And even if timbre-drenched 21-year-old his boppy-love tapestry cranks from the way local legends OVE (Elly Khuli, Nigbati, Redd7) rap. The first time around, they were all just kids in a burning Los Angeles, now their seeds preen and wiggle on the album sleeve, oblivious to nets, ensues, Horace Tapscott and the sounds of the unseen and unseen. An orphan Volume 1D mixtape, "We idees/Cause we starring artists/Still believ' in the same Civi I blew up in but I still got wind" before letting out a chestful of wheezes, headaches and woes.

AL-SHID IGNANT/FIGHT CLUB OLD KING ENTERTAINMENT OVERSEAS 12"

When Biggie debuted in 1994 with "Juicy," the rapper had explained it was "Time to get paid/Blow up like the World Trade" though BIG's no longer with us, the skill of comparing the ruthlessness of one's spirit with nation-state tragedy lives on with steady Old Mad upstart Al-Shid, who crudely bills himself the "hottest thing to hit the streets of New York since Building Sereno." Over J-Zen's playful production, Shid introduces himself to his scared-shedless neighbors of lighter hue: "Good Mornin' America, this is your future/An ignorant black mulatto/Go to juke/ju/Boast your economy?/Nah, rather suck it up/Got on weed, go triple-platinum and fuck it up." Ignorance can be funny when it's clever, and Shid's clearly smarter than your average Entman-style New Nihilist. "If you're not a chrisomaker then stop stretching my patience," he swears before closing the song by setting off a double word war: "Fight Club!" Not exactly Shid's moral redeemer, particularly when Huggy Bear appears to help harmonize about abortion clinics, Nazis and all things sacred.

DMX WHO WE BE DEF JAM 3X457970 12"

Folks decry the dumpy raps which run low newsworthy, but every now and then something profound falls from an unexpected mouth, and things go good for four minutes at a time. As attention spans splutter and album manifests go untouched, DMX backs back with a bombastic simple indictment of the powers that be: "Who We Be" has neither build, mass

progress or change; it's the rap approximation of one grand old repeated line ellipses. DMX's clunking verses equal civilization's despair into sharp, punchy little bars from the bottom of the well ("What they don't know is/The bulshit/The drama/The guys/The army/The city/The femme"). It's an immovable single punctuated by a chorus of delirious youngsters bellowing "They don't know who we be," and though X prudently chooses to name neither the "We" or "They," it only serves to make things that much clearer.

GRANDMASTER FLASH THE OFFICIAL ADVENTURES OF GRANDMASTER FLASH STRUCTURE 011 CD

This is the first album devoted to the tumblecoasts of the man who just about every musician currently plying their trade who isn't a rockist bore owes their living to. "The disco dream of the mean machine, the Darth Vader of the slide fader" Admittedly, it's a very strange, sometimes ill-fitting conglomeration—Flash recording his old routines with little snippets of 1979 and 1982 appearances at the T-Connection and Disco Convention and full length 1979 and 1982 classics like Babe Ruth's "The Mexican"—but everyone should have it in their collection if only to give Flash some claps. If you know it some time and a bit of concentration, though, it does offer some insights into what those old black parties might have been like: "Flash Tears the Roof Off" finds Flash droling the climax for even longer than even Dr. Funkenstein did on the Parliament albums, tacking us with the rito of "Give Us The Funk (Tear the Roof Off The Sucker)" before unleashing a prolonged wave of "Xpache" songs and deconstructed disco synths which lasts roughly eight minutes until Flash finally delivers the goods and lets P-Funk go. "Flash Has More Bounce" on the other hand, maintains its momentum throughout its 12 minute duration and must have been the kind of thing at the peak of an evening's proceedings. Good as this is, let's just hope for the tiny snippets from the T-Connection and Disco Convention are just teasers for full releases, and that no one's holding on to the tapes to maintain the value of their collection. (Peter Shapiro)

KID GINSENG GERMANIK ROBOTS POD POD PRODUCTIONS NO NUMBER MC

There's a lot of music on this tape, but that is almost beside the point. Tucked at the end of Side A and the opening of Side B are fragments of an interview the Kid did with electro pioneer Arthur Baker late last century. "I hope I don't sound like some nerd, stuck in the past," the laddish Ginseng apologizes, sipping the dool from his chin upon mention of unreleased Beker-Bombastate duos. The SOB Kid, who funds his habit by doing for The Tom Tom Club, is a true child of the Atomic Age, born alongside half of these songs back in 1982. His faithful tape includes all the standards (Man Parrish, Jonzun Crew, Maroon, Egyptian Lover), and though he runs roughshod over some crazier masses,

Ginseng definitely gets wildstyle points for his transmutation of Shannon's "Give Me Tonight" and some riot fantasy blends like the aptly named "Play At Your Own Planet Risk." Montage moment of the year: whispering the rug from under World Class Wrecking Crew's "Juice" to reveal the ready, litting groove of Kraftwerk's "Our De France."

KILLA KELA CROPCIRCLES/ACCACKELA JAZZ FUDGE PRODUCTIONS 12"

Your breath is too short to box with Kela. The talented young firm with the fatted lips returns with his second solo single, getting momentarily grimly with the technically solid but generally unimpassioned drum 'n' bass of "Croscircles" before stringing glory wrongs lower fidelities on the bonus tracks. Clean and precise recordings are the listener's enemy, anyone who witnessed his back and forth play with Mr. Thug on the busy Astorville Mouthwash can attest to how much better Kela sounded draped in the noise and explosive wash of a cheap cassette. There's a thin fine line between fanning and beatboxing, and Kela just about crosses it on the superior DJ/Vedra remix, but this time Kela gets to solo and wonder rather than just politely mouth the "amen" break ad nauseum. Alongside space coded Vedra's patient diligences and docking sequences, Kela mumbles and flutters an almost comical accompaniment.

LIFESAVES HEADSE/CLUTCH MOISE DUMMUNION GROUP 12"

As if it wasn't strange enough that the tight-knit Quantum collective decided to open racks, their recent sightings had from Portland, Oregon, land of technical bluffs and little mass. No women, the Savas party of Mr. Atlas and Reverend Shines assault, it just means more time to chisel those better rhythms and work on those start-stop drum chips. On the former count, Atlas considers "computerizing" your hands so you can hold your applause, while his partner oddly accuses, "You couldn't hold your weight on a Jerry Casac mutage." Labelmate and Blackalicious producer Choc Noel shows the pair the true way of Quantumism on the B side, with "Movement 2" unrhyming a gloriously post-1973 baseline and slapping on a honey bridge to cement the Old School park jam fight.

BOBBY DEEP BURN LUG 54997 12"

Dre gets the unfortunate feeling that Jay-Z did indeed set Mobo Deep's career back a few years when he ridiculed, "You little b, I got more sticks bigger than you." The print-sized Mobo duo of Prodigy and Havoc returned with the offensive boring and useless infamy, from which this excellent single is rescued. Havoc's guitar snakes and sports in search of its own tail, and with fellow shanty on the hook, this is probably the prettiest and most sublime shoot 'em up back-back point of the year. Mobo buddy

Big Noyd even returns with the deadeye threat, "But wait, you don't think I live a pop life now/That's naive, you could get popped next time." Always hefty for the kill, Prodigy saves the scale from his cells and sticks it through your face. In the end, you're so dead that "all they had was your picture at the funeral."

THE OPUS MOVEMENT TWO THIRTEEN MUSIC SUPPLIES 12008 12"

There are few sad songs in Hip-hop, and those that do pop up usually deal with memory in a very particular way: force but vulnerable, proud and celebratory with a hint of remorse, crushed and bruised but never pathetic. A truly sad rare tune trades in the strengths for the struggles. It treats the passing of a memory as seriously as the passing of the person. Like Proest bring his madonnas, Slag surveys everyday experience and lists ending memory from touch in "The River," a makeshift elegy for a dear character named Brian. While art, water, wind and sound remind him of enough, the "River" in question reminds him of a single crying mother, at which point Slag laments, "I'd trade all the buzzes in for one more conversation/We can sit in the shade and discuss the meaning of sacred/Cause I can't see the garden no more, just the aphids." The Opus's swarm of often strings and enchanted scene oases are pleasant enough, but it's Slag alone who inhabits the life out of these moments. And I wish your name was on the guest list for my shows, he finishes, "I want you to see me finding my freedom."

TAKE FO' SUPERSTARS PARTY AT THE LUAW TIME FOR MUSIC 60124 12"

All torque and no play make Mamie Fresh a dull producer, so every now and then he leaves the Megatone to scout New Orleans' local talent and maybe cop a catchphrase. This compilation of local legends puts the Cash Money Minutemen phenomenon in proper perspective. Though Daz Dux and Jubilee may not get much disc outside of Louisiana, in the Big Easy they're as popular as whoever's running against David Duke. Like Washington DC's super-regional Go Go community, it's clear that New Orleans rap looks elsewhere for perfect beats. Though the (Hawian pigroot party) Iau theme seems a stretch, the ghostly steel drums of the title track turn this cello into "Whatfuuu think, you Jubilee?" Lure B scuffs before dissolving one of the record's many audio fences. DJ Jubilee's "Do The Maro" bites the sizzling release from Niveyio's Super Mario Brothers and friends Willie Puckett, Aine and others wailing headbumps over lethal stabs and cues. Though it's obviously a stretch recording of a "live" party, most of the exceptional cuts here are filled with call-and-response cries to do dances like "the Marseaus" and "the Gatsysap." A clearer decision comes with Jubilee's original recording of June's eventual hit "Back That Azz Up," basically The Jackson 5's "I Want You Back" getting riffed apart by synths and spiky scratches. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

EUGENE CHADBOURNE

AYER UNDEAD

ORION 3211/CD1992 CD

ZU & EUGENE CHADBOURNE

MOTORHELLINGTON

FILMAY 777021 CD

Marc Ribot paid his tribute on the recent album *Sans*, and now fellow guitarist Chadbourne applies his speedy scowling and manic clusters to the business of mourning saxophonist Albert Ayler. Within the long shadow of his cultivated eccentricity, Chadbourne shares Ayler's deep interest in vernacular music and the physical properties of sound. Amplified into distortion, or soaked in company with bassist Joe Williams and drummer U. Jenneskens, Chadbourne is at his most consistently satisfying on this project.

Motorhellington finds him hanging out with an Italian quartet. Zu clearly relish the chance to try his waxes with the Schoobically overfed, although armed with trumpet, sax, bass and drums they sound a touch insubstantial looking Black Sabbath's "Iron Man". A varied and entertaining program follows, celebrating Kraftwerk, Don Cowie, Mingus, John, Sly Saxon and James Brown before recklessly attempting *Motopheads* "Sacrifice". The guitar work is often startling, and Chadbourne serves up some of his finest and most comical vocal moments.

VATTEL CHERRY'S (TRIO)

VIRTUE

DISCIPLES

COMMERCIAL FREE JAZZ NO NUMBER 2XCD

Bassist Vattel Cherry has backed the powerful tenor of Charles Gayle. Disciples finds him in very different circumstances, intimate contexts that encourage contemplative engagement with his instrument. On the first disc he interacts with reedman Joskie Blake and guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Ras Dins, on the second with Nicole Cherry on violin and John Dierker playing bass clarinet. The instrumentation of each set poses particular challenges; there's chamber seriousness to both and (especially on the latter) rewards that only come with close attention and carefully controlled response. Cherry fires well and it would be good to hear his sister's confident improvising in less chaotic surroundings.

STEVE COLEMAN &

FIVE ELEMENTS

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

LABEL BLAU LBL05543/44/PM6302 2XCD

Concert recordings from Montpellier, made in the course of two days during July 2001 and packaged with customary care by the French label. It's a relaxed, loose-imbued set enabling Coleman to stretch out and flourish his melodic fluency and well-defined articulation. His alto lines either fly quicker than smoothly rolling asher gleams sustained by piano, two percussionists and electric bass. Trumpeters Anthea Campbell-Alexander and Jonathan Arlington add icy embellishments and supportive snails. Bobcat duets are paid in pieces by Parker and Monk, there's Mel Waldron's "Straight Ahead" and a Jerry Goldsmith number

as well as Coleman originals including two new compositions. Coleman at his most directly pleasurable.

CURLEW

MEET THE CURLEWS

CONFORM RUMBLE CD

Saxophonist George Cartwright formed Curlew, an electric fusion outfit, in 1979. His inspirations remain dormant on their eighth album and guitarist David Williams, the other long-term member, continues to be both daring and to the point. New bassist Fred Chakos, who penned the opening piece, has worked with Hugh Hopper, New Directions, Big Golden and something of Chris Ojeda's approach to marking out acoustic space. So far so good, but the lurking glaucomatous of Chris Parker's acoustic piano playing is a source of unease, loosening the tight Curlew knot towards meandering and eventually a sense of fatness in the music.

PAUL DUNMALL &

TONY BIANCO

I YOU

PMR 876001 CD

In the *Utuna* Trio, drummer Tony Bianco fronts the two tenors of Dunmall and Simon Picard. In Picard's absence, Dunmall has pulled out all the stops for *I You*. The opener "Eternal Dance" is a charming tour de force with the saxophonist in mighty form. Dunmall leads thoughtfully, leaving the drummer to supply the fervent backdrop for his gleaming compositions and the bed for his tenor's bounding. After 30 minutes Bianco, drained of energy, sensibly requested a slow number to follow. Dunmall obliged, but without slackening his intensity that persists through a third tenor bout and final soprano whiff. Highly energetic, compulsive performances.

GNU

MIDNIGHT BREAKFAST

CUBIC MUSIC OF CD

GNU is a Japanese quartet comprising keyboards, bass and drums, plus Old Sonic affiliate Masahiko Okura on alto sax, bass clarinet, keyboards, electronics and the bulk of conventional credits. On this sparkling half-hour set of *Midnight Breakfast* they cut through with minimalist sweepiness and quarks. "Straw People" suggests a Canterbury disposition amidst the cocktail lounge (see "Anonim") sung on Robert Wyatt's *Robson Jamb*. *Midnight Breakfast* is designed for easy access yet is pleasantly off-centre.

GREG KELLEY &

JASON LESCALETTE

FORLORN GREEN

DETHVILLE 219 CD

New Englander Lescalette, who works with tape loops and computer, has been heard previously as a guest of *improvisation*, trumpetier Kelley's favoured project with saxophonist Rob Ramey, on the album *In Which the Silent Partner-Dwells*. Forlorn Green results from two live dates, a solo by Kelley and another overseen by Lescalette. A church and a gallery are cited as

recording venues. However subsequent treatments have assumed these four periods hang together like hinged panels. Kelley's spluttering evolves into a massive drone litened with trumpet stabs, shrill then booming then juddering resonance is built from leaping breath, loud screech and cascade erupt from a slow-moving parabola, feeble vibrations narrow to gaseous blasts which open into long reverberations. Kelley keeps on queuing. And yes, the title is a conscious Batastun pun.

JOHN MAYER'S INDO-JAZZ

FUSIONS

SHIVA NATARAJ KING OF

DANCE

PMR 876001 CD

The classic recordings valued and composer Mayer made during the mid-1960s with saxophonist Joe Harrell have proved a modest blessing, in that he is still too easily classed only as a heroic figure. Affinities between jazz and Indian music have been exploited often in the intervening years but Mayer's buoyant arrangements retain their charm. This current album perpetuates the idea established in the original project yet it sounds fresh and there's strong playing from the youthful ensemble, especially saxophonist Carlos Lopez-Real who has also written two serious pieces. Composers Stan Seltman and David Murphy have responded to commissioners, and Mayer relocates Aron Bruckner to Maersk — and it may be, Mayer has his place in history but his music still brims with vitality.

PARKER/HASLAM/EDWARDS

PARKER/HASLAM/EDWARDS

SLAM 314 CD

The programming of this concert recording, made in Oxford in September 2000, seems calculated to let tension mount. George Haslam kicks off with a fruity, approachable baritone solo, then consecrates the welcome with his Hungarian lion, the *Temple*. Even Parker pulls a little more circular breathing spectacular out of the bag, concluding a duo (it often seems) with a phantom soprano partner. John Edwards sustains the momentum through his tense, thoughtful double bass solo, then plays with the surge and recoil of Parker's swirling tenor. Finally the bassist stands squarely between these two complicitly emphatic and markedly dissimilar saxophonists like a referee even-handedly adjudicating the anticipated tussle. It leaves you wanting more.

PERRY/STEVENS/LYTTON/

TAYLOR/PROVOST

IMPROVISING PERCUSSIONIST

PMR 876001 CD

These recordings were made in 1974 to complement a series of articles written at that time by Trevor Taylor for *Drums and Percussion* magazine. Compiled as a CD, the five solos testify to the part played by each drummer in developing percussive options for improvised music. Frank Perry is characteristically meditative amidst his gongs, following out a virtual temple

in metallic sound. John Stevens, the album's dedicatory, trails absorbing fumes of small incense and concentrated gestures. Paul Lytton, with his electronically enhanced sitar, creates unique arrangements of timbre and texture, a variegated surface of gong, hatch and shawl. Taylor too deploys electronics as part of his expressive drum drama. Eddie Prevost is meticulous and precise as ever, crafting loud sound-forms through extreme discipline. A percussion showcase may appear a specialised taste, but there's a spectacular improvising here for any audience.

IRENE SCHWEIZER

CHICAGO PIANO SOLO

INFAKT 005 CD

CO STREIFF/

IRENE SCHWEIZER

TWIN LINES

INFAKT 079 CD

New 60, and too often neglected in discussions of improvised music and jazz piano, Schweizer is a key figure on the European scene. When the time was right she plunged energetically into the ferment of free blowing; subsequently she reconstructed her music on the ground cleared during that iconoclastic phase, and has become a marvellous soloist as well as a responsive group player. The Chicago set ranks with her best solo work. Robustly rhythmic passages or delicate statements from the instrument's interior are executed with almost mechanical precision, yet her sensitivity to dynamic nuance is remarkable. She can emulate the warmth of Abdullah Ibrahim, the angularity of Monk, the fire of Taylor and remain distinctively Schweizer. In *Xerocopia's* phrase, she knows Time.

Her collaboration with alto saxophonist Co Streiff, also a Swiss musician although most widely known for her work with the Vienna Art Orchestra, began in 1986. Initially Schweizer played drums in the duo. On piano she still nurtures rhythms and Streiff, who shares her interest in African music, proves an entirely sympathetic partner. Streiff pinned most of the material. Even when playing ballads there's toughness and bite in her playing that matches the pianist's readiness and Schweizer shows her capacity to be a willing and imaginative accompanist as well as a gooding, teasing partner.

ARCHIE SHEPP &

HORACE PARLAN

SWING LOW

ELEPHANT EL2705 CD

Previous meetings have confirmed the affinity between Parlan's piano playing, craggy left hand and bluesy phrasing, and Shepp's seasoned tone and emotionally charged historical sensibility. This relaxed, informal session was captured live before a Zurich hotel audience in 1991. The material tells the tale: "Swing Low Sweet Chorus", "Go Down Moses", "Make Me A Pallet On The Floor", "See See Rider", Gendwin, Elgin, Shepp's tribute to Roscoe Smith, Parlan's to Billie Holiday. Shepp plays more interspersed with alto and indulges his need to sing. It's a dignified, attainable wallow. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

VITO ACCONCI
FOUR SALVA STUDIOS
SQUANT FUGGER PRESS SOUND/CD

CHRISTOF MIGONE
CRACKERS
LOCUST 1 CD

New York artist Vito Acconci belongs to that generation of conceptual players, including Chris Burden and Donna Oakes, who were more interested in what the body can do than what it actually made of. Early videotape performances featured Acconci showing his hand down his throat and keeping it there until he started gagging. The highly amplified soundtrack for his 1971 video, *Waterways: Four Salva Studios*, is presented both in its unedited entirety and electronically filtered as "Under" by Cristof Migone and Alexandre St-Onge. This potentially tense exchange between physical sound-making and its digitally smoothed phantom sides packaged with a blob of dried spit inside the splotch. At least, that's what it looks like.

Christof Migone's *Crackers* takes this notion a step further, inviting people to crack their fingers, backbones, knees, elbows and whatever, thus routing the results through his laptop. Now that mobile phones have superseded inaudible cracking as the most irritating public nuisance, there's something deeply depressing about comparing where some of these clicks and pops came from.

MARTIN ARCHER & GERALDINE MONK
ANGEL HIGH WINGS
LA COOKA RATCHA LOVIN' 49 CD

In an act of human endurance to rival anything by Acconci, Archer and Monk prepared to record their momentous cycle of solemnly fragile songs by listening to the entire Schubert *Lieder* (which stretch over 21 individual CDs) in a single sitting. The experience left them contemplating how such delicately expressed sentiments "might manifest in a world where music has become less forgiving and words squeal with compressed notes." Assisting them in these hellish memorables are Julie Tipton, Chris Cutler on drums, Mick Beck on bassoon and Philip Thomas on prepared piano. Those still scratching their heads over music's capacity for forgiveness evidently haven't been listening to enough Schubert.

JOHANNES BERGMARK & UNN FAHLSTROM
MOUTH TO MOUTH METHOD
FIREWORK EDITION FR1030 CD

LEIF ELGGREN
LATRINE
FIREWORK EDITION FR1031 CD

An emphasis upon physical endurance and individual physicality are both aspects of the same digital delirium: a nostalgia flight back to the body as refuge from the weightlessness of today's data systems. *Mouth To Mouth Method* presents two individuals playing senses tongue loose with each other, while the listener is "hissed, howled, chewed, consumed, vomited and regurgitated" over the course of its uninterrupted 71 minutes and 23 seconds.

Reminding us that all music is, by definition, waste product, Sweden's Leif Elggren recorded the source material for *Latrine* on the toilet. Whatever squeals, splashes and surprises were originally produced, however, have been so heavily processed that they now exist only as a series of sonorous metallic layers. Perhaps in the age of the laptop, there's no need for such stag party novelties as the *Laff Records* The Crapitation Concert or the grand Flatus gesture, but either seems preferable to something that could easily have been recorded in any room of the house without soiling the carpets.

GRAND MAL
PERFECT FIT
UNUSUAL UNUS CD

There's a moment on this rather innocuous collection of songs and assemblages when Ann Welmer's drum machine locks into a steady march, percussionist Justin Bennett produces some icy resonances on his fitter and Stephanie Blitnick lets her normally upmy vocal cords relax into a laidback purr. For its brief duration, "One For The Road" provides some structured relief from the moribundian lo-fi conventions wailing to be rediscovered on the remaining 15 tracks, suggesting that these guys should really think about getting rhythmic more often. Grand Mal will appeal to anyone who still believes that life is a (Dadaist) cabaret, old chum.

IF, BWANA
I, ANGELICA
POCUS 21223 3CD

Making a tripe noise with a minimum of fuss, Al Margolis solidifies guitars, tapes, computer manipulations with analogue synths and steel cello over an exuberantly sprawling two CD set, subtitled "Nick Nack" and "Paddy Whack" respectively. Among the generously proportioned sensory assaults on offer are "Guitars By AF," a naggingly insistent rock drill of a track, "Wailing Der Dog," where scorpined metal and feedback accompany Ted the dog on a romp through the great outdoors, and "Go Pond," a gloomy, rolling study of apocalyptic pretenses. This is the kind of stuff that needs to take up space, and Margolis knows how to fill it admirably.

CARSTEN JOST
YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN TO KNOW WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS
LADOMAT QUALITY CD

To enlist teeny-bopsters in its underground campaign against US capitalist imperialism, the Weatherman organization produced a songbook offering radical new lyrics to tried pop standards such as the Supremes' "Stop In The Name Of Love" which consequently began: "Stop your imperialist aggression/We're going to smash the sale." Accompanied by images of riot cops, burning cars and anti-WTO protests, the bleak abstractions of Jost's brooding techno-pop take on a darker, more serious edge. "Bitch Brigade" opens with a burst of brooding "Eminem" with random synthetic garlands. The beats on this Austrian release are implacable, the sense of

momentum formidable. Should be burning down a disco near you soon.

MESSER CHUPS
MISS LIBIDO
SOLNZE NO NUMBER CD

MESSER CHUPS
VAMP BABES
SOLNZE/HYPER UTESBOY NO NUMBER CD

MESSER FÜR FRAU MULLER
DREAMS
HYPER UTESBOY NO NUMBER CD

NOZHIK CHUPS
BRIDE OF THE ATOM
HYPER UTESBOY NO NUMBER CD

Embracing elements of decadent capitalism that even most Westerners would shy away from, any Russian lounge mutants Oleg Kuznetsov and Oleg Galkin (who it isn't one or another are responsible for all of these aliases) play twenty so-called music for people who know that the future actually happened over 40 years ago, was scripted by Ed Wood and (illustrated by) Eric Stanton while Orsonell and the faltering glow of Bela Lugosi loomed on. Revisited: the power of the Orson analogue synth, the Man From Planet X and peppy little pop numbers with titles like "The Second Advent Of Elvis," "The Pommanor," "Comical Twist" and "Go, Satan, Go!" Above all, marvel at what sounds like sampled dialogue taken from, say it isn't so, actual Soviet B movies. This is the start of the Laatste Revolution.

AKI ONDA
PRECIOUS MOMENTS
SOLNZE/SOLNZE CD

Having formerly worked under the project name Audio Sports from 1991-96, Japanese composer Aki Onda has been creating intimate solo releases since his 1998 debut, *Beautiful Conviction*. The job introspection and hermetic spaces of "Someplace" and "Gazing Into The Eyes, Then Closing The Eyes" tend, like the CDs ingeniously folded cardboard slips, to be little hard to get into, but the thoughtful blending of electronics, acoustic instrumentation and field recordings on "Toward A Place In The Sun" and the charming "Fish Don't Know It's Raining" are far more accommodating.

KNUT REMOND
DEEP STRUCTURE, COSMICS VOL 3
V RECORDS v001 CD

Whether flashed up on electric signboards, hypostated or carved in stone, the seaward thrust of Jenny Holzer's aphoristic texts lies in the extent to which they confound meaning in the least number of words, succeeding through the deceptive speed with which they blur truth with supposition. Working with soprano Kamela Bruggmann, Swiss composer Remond has fractured and deconstructed Holzer's words to the point where they become amorphous ciphers. Set against a digitally textured background, this process is quite effective, but it's the dramatic live duet in Zurich's Esther-Wyss-Park Underpass that makes the hour stand out.

MARINA ROSENFIELD & THE SHEER FROST ORCHESTRA
DROP, HOP, DRONE, SCRATCH, SLIDE & A FOR ANYTHING
CHARHIZMA ONE CD

The glissando produced by running a slide up the strings of an electric guitar brings with it the thrill of exorcism, using nail polish bottles as slides and feeding the results through a number of laptops, whose operators include Kaffe Matthews and the ubiquitous Ikeu Men. The Sheer Frost Orchestra have taken this simple yet symbolic effect into an entirely new dimension. The result is a substantive form of *Kaustros* capable of going from the particular to the infinite in a matter of seconds.

PHILIP SAMARTZIS & SAKIKO M
ARTIFACT
DOROBIO LIMITED EDITIONS NO NUMBER CD

It may appear just a tad disingenuous to apply the title "Surface Noise" to one of the highly strung semi-transparent scrolls of digital noise Sachiko M and Samartzis have created in this provocative musical collaboration. That is until you realise what each unique frequency pitch is actually doing to the inside lining of your ears. Fortunately, on "Rapture" the duo also move preoccupied with questions of digital aphasia and auditory collapse to do any lasting bodily damage. An aggressive physical presence doesn't require volume alone.

CONRAD SCHNITZLER
CONAL 2001
SPELLENDEN SUBSIDIARY CD

A former student of artist Joseph Beuys, whose work in the 60s and 70s concentrated heavily on issues of physicality and extremes of duration in a rapidly accelerating media environment, Schnitzler has developed a fantastic sense of both timing and attack. Having made contributions to the German electronics scene, as an early member of Tangerine Dream and in partnership with Ruediger and Modbus of Cluster, it was his releases in the early 1980s that gave Krautrock a harder new wave edge. In fact, one of the three untitled tracks presented here, a supposedly huge incursion into abstract sound, was first recorded in 1981 and mixed only in 2001. Bure, waywardly uncompromising and truly visionary.

SPUNK
FILTERED THROUGH FRIENDS
RUNE GRAMMOFON R0229 CD

This Norwegian female anarchist quartet's 1999 debut album, whose title, loosely translated, declares, "The only thing I know is that it's not a vacuum cleaner," was a relaxed symposium on the nature of noise. The nature of naming is often to get at what something's not: thus here we have the sprightly, febrile pop of Kim Horvath's "Alephah", Peabody, the dinky meditative longueurs of "Truly Falling Slowly" from Spunk's Kristin Anderson, Sam Demons' twisted du-hello effects and the spicy asymmetry of Lasse Marhaug's "Septembre/derange" 2. ☐

Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain. This month: Nanoloop and Little Sound software is creating a scene devoted to the Game Boy. By Magnus Larsson



It's not a toy: Sequencing on the Game Boy (left); Tobi Wan and LayDi from Swedish duo Puss

Some of the most significant musical leaps in the 20th century came from artists deliberately misusing technology. From Edgard Varèse assembling recording devices with multiple recording heads, via Nam June Paik dottering soap operas into a variety of geometric patterns to David scorching the surface of CDs and sampling the resulting skipping noises. Scorching, feedback, tape loops — these are all strategies enabling musicians to exploit a given technology's hidden potential in a revelatory way, using the right tool for the wrong task. Which is exactly what Game Boy composing is about.

Last year, Hamburg art student Oliver Wietchow created an experimental sound sequencing program called *nanoloop*. At about the same time, the tracker software (an application that allows composition using sample-based instruments) *Little Sound DJ* was programmed by Swedish technology student Johan Kotrlnski. These two sequencing applications both come stored on ordinary game cartridges and allow musicians to compose multiple sound loops which can be synthesized and added in real time using an ordinary Game Boy console. Made by enthusiasts curious about the possibilities

inherent in their old toys, this software is wiring new links by the day, and Game Boy composers are already forming a community using the *Nanoloop* and *Little Sound DJ* Websites to swap MP3s and advertise their gigs.

Sporting dark sunglasses and shockingly pink tees, Stockholm group Puss (Swedish for Kiss) have made live Game Boy performances a specialty. Their unique blend of vintage bleeps and bizzes have rendered them a small but devoted cult following in their hometown. Using two Game Boys connected by a pink sync cable, the duo have already played a handful of gigs and released the *We Are Puss* album on their own Pussaloca label late last year.

Ever since the late Gumper Naka invented the first Nintendo Game Boy in 1987, millions of gamers all over the world have spent hours and hours hunching over Super Mario or Pokémon games — and listening to the background music made by composers such as Nobuo Uematsu and Kenji Yano. The relatively poor sound quality of the Game Boy's built-in speakers forced them to create strong melodies rather than tracks based on harmonies or rhythms, a limiting aesthetic that appeals to today's band of Game Boy musicians as well.

"The Game Boy has got four channels to work

with, which leaves us with a total of eight voices we're using one each," says Puss's Tobi-Wan (aka Tobias von Holsten). "The limits are extreme, which makes you work hard to optimise your sound. You can't be lazy, as you can with a 24 channel studio. We haven't even explored our full capacity yet — we've never used more than four sounds at a time. It's been all about using melodies to create nice beats. Harmony might be where to go next. To produce a chord using *Little Sound DJ*, you have to work with arpeggios, and a beautiful minor arpeggio played on a Game Boy and fading out into a chord just makes me want to cry!"

Earlier this year the Oslo Bruit label followed suit by releasing *Nanoloop 2.0*, a four CD compilation album including contributions from artists such as Membr, Hrvatski, Bleckum from Bleckum, Pita, Vladislav Delay, DAT Politics and Stok, Hassen & Wolkman. The compilation is the result of a project begun at *Nanoloop* creator Oliver Wietchow's German art school, and the first serious attempt of gathering several composers on one Game Boy-themed album.

In theory you can maintain an endless amount of Game Boys. A fantastic set up at the moment is that of Game Boy musician and software developer R3Cyndler, working with four

consoles connected to homemade noise generators and effects run by the *Little Sound DJ* software. Other artists involved in this 'Game Boy scene' include Role Model (*Little Sound DJ* inventor Johan Kotrlnski's alias), Tash80, h0ffE, 6955, Poodle Scream, Nallsepp, Bud Meier, Waigel/Pinkal, Coxax and Handshill.

Inevitably, the scene has already been dismissed as a bunch of kids shirking their piano lessons to play Tetris and *Kunikida Kurumi*, some people attending the first Puss gig even suspected that LayDi and Tobi-Wan were simply playing games over backing tapes. So what does the group say to those who accuse them of playing too much?

"Nobility," admits Tobi-Wan. "I totally agree. Game Boys are toys. But at the same time, that's the beauty of it. All you need is four channels. And with a cheap old Game Boy unit and an even cheaper piece of software, anyone can do this. Which proves that you don't need a lot of effects and devices to make nice breaks and beats. It's not about the size of your studio, it's about what you do with what you have." □

Nanoloop 2.0 is out now on Disco Bruit. We Are Puss is out on Pussaloca's Website. www.little-sound.com, www.nanoloop.com, www.disco-bruit.de, www.pussaloca.com

and unChristian ways. **Backmasked Messages** (see burninr.com/subliminal/backmasked_messages.html) is a site set up to examine this theory by generously supplying song snippets played forwards and in reverse. Queen's classic "Another One Bites The Dust" makes "It's fun to smoke marijuana," the Beatles' "Revolution Number 9" hilariously becomes "I'm me on dead meat", while their "I'm So Tired" fecked exaggerated rumours of Paul McCartney's death in 1966. "Paul is a dead man, miss Ann, miss Ann, MISS HIM!" There's not much new outrage here: the site retrofits the protracted Jada Priest teenage suicide saga, and there's a whole page devoted to Led Zeppelin's "Shoreline To Heaven", a popular tribute to Satan. But at least having the samples to hand allows you to make up your own mind, just keep the Lord close by your side.

ANNE HILDE NEST

Go To:



For the last 12 months there has been a feverishly busy 'create bodgie' culture growing faster than you say "So me me". At the heart of it all is **Backmasked** (www.backmasked.com), a blog site (the simple day-style Web-updating/publishing system allowing anyone and their granny to maintain a site) set up by The Dr (aka one Daniel Sheldon) and the more mysterious "Monkeyboy". *Backmasked* contains a monster list of all the semi-serious, Finnish-sounding hybrids currently roving in a bedstir near you. Kurtis Rush's "George Gets His Freak On" (George Michael ambled up a bedstir near you), Jackknife Lee's charming "Get Ur M@ Cock On" (Jackknife Lee vs. Monkey: Soular's "Smells Like Body" (you guessed it: Ninona versus Destiny's Child), and the leader of this particular pack, London project Girls On Top, with the likes of Whitney Houston's "Wanna Dance With Somebody" laid

over Kraftwerk's "Trans-Europe Express". According to *Backmasked*, Missy's the favourite backmasked-in source (aka Missy's recent Volant third release *FranklyBitchin'*), closely followed by Michael Jackson. The site will guide you to countless "hookies" (see Top Ten Bodgies lists, unholy couplets (Drinney and Ashes, anyone?), links to other bodgiesters' sites and, most importantly, MP3s in abundance; get ur download manager on before the authorities arrive in.

Unholy matrimony aside, we all know that rock compels the soul. Or so says Pastor Gary Greenwald, who still insists on campaigning against revised messages in rock songs — messages inexpressible to listeners cannot directly perceive, and therefore have no power to resist. The subconscious mind interprets the messages, and rock groups utilize backmasked speech to influence their audience in strange



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#049

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Flowers in concrete: graffiti, Washington DC style

FREE AGENTS: A HISTORY OF WASHINGTON DC GRAFFITI
ROGER GASTMAN (COMPILED)
SOFT SKULL PRESS/PBK \$20

DONDI WHITE: STYLE MASTER GENERAL: THE LIFE OF GRAFFITI ARTIST DONDI WHITE

ANDREW 'ZEPHYR' WITTEN & MICHAEL WHITE
REGAN BOOKS/HARPER COLLINS/PBK \$35
BY HJH HJH

The code of the streets is found on the walls, mixed with grace and traced in struggles and squiggles. In a 1995 interview, legendary graffiti artist Dondi White explained his first real exposure to those sacred languages: "I think I got into it on my own, because as I would go to different neighborhoods I would always look on the walls to see what gang was in the neighborhood. I was always reading shit on the walls." Once Dondi himself started dabbling in graffiti in the mid-1970s, he and his posse maneuvered the thoroughfares of New York with the keen awareness of amateur cartographers, keeping track of which way trains ran, what boroughs boasted the freshest styles and what landmarks afforded maximum visibility. Not only did writers like Dondi or Washington DC's free agents have an acute understanding of Nylon and bubble letters, they were educated in the language of space and geography.

Though these two books are both about 'shit

on the walls,' they're also about how different those walls looked in two very different cities. For all its faults, *Free Agents: A History Of Washington DC Graffiti* is an indispensable contribution to the culture's myths, since it isn't about New York and HipHop isn't giving the off-camera cats. Outside of Michael Walsh's Graffiti, pieces of Stephen Powers's *The Art Of Getting Up* and the numerous volumes on Los Angeles gang graffiti, few books have strayed from the 'canonized' stories of the five boroughs and Wild Style.

Editor Roger Gastman, who first caught the bug as a part of the city's proud hardcore scene, does an admirable job introducing readers to the DC area's many eccentric characters. There's Scratch Master Hyle (SMH) leaving his initials in front of the White House and roughneck Cast keeping a running log of enemies, to beat down alongside his graffiti conquests. We meet Cool Osoo Oari, a jet-setted Go-Go graffiti legend with an almost terrifying addiction to getting up. At one point, he even begins yelling his own name at every Go-Go show he attends, essentially 'tagging' the groups' live recordings.

The problem with *Free Agents* is that it rarely plays to its own strengths, opting to trumpet individual legend over regional exceptionalism. Washington DC is weird. It is one of the nation's most dangerous cities as well as one of its most sacred. It is a heavily policed silver dotted with lawmakers and monuments, and yet it boasts one of the more storied traditions of artful vandalism,

reflected through the HipHop, hardcore and Go-Go scenes. Contributor Neal Eskand makes it a point to introduce the local quarks and headline tendencies of the city's unique Go-Go culture in the excellent Disco Dan chapter, but the book as a whole really strays from its peirbook-style approach, meaning little attention to chronology, context or local and scene politics.

In contrast, *Dondi White: Style Master General* is important precisely because Dondi's story is so New York: a sweet soul full of life, favour and contradiction. Curators Andrew Witten and Michael White do an astounding job putting together the pieces of Dondi's life, collecting elementary school drawings, rare photographs, private sketches and family portraits to make this one of the most compelling, beautiful and stylish graffiti books ever published. From his childhood sketches of '70s basketball legend Julius Erving and Jesus on lined paper to his 1980s gallery work, the book succeeds in transmitting that lust for life that outlined all of Dondi's pieces in marvelously divine, unseen strokes.

It is often argued that the 'right authorising frameworks' are the only thing preventing art snobs from seeing the best graffiti craftsmanship for what it is: not primitive but presidential, not reckless but careful, transient and disciplined, too fast to stand around and intellectualise, forget the colour wheels and canvases. The dangers of glimpses into Dondi's private sketchbook — bold and clean black ink against aged, faded and formerly white paper — attest to

the man's precision. In commenting on his train work, Witten (better known as graffiti pioneer and Dondi associate Zephyr) and an assortment of Old School cats don't merely memorialise a fallen writer; they recount the passing of a man who could turn a steaming silver slug into an undeniable and confounding work of art.

Well, the art world did catch on, and the book is also about that odd early 80s moment when graffiti/HipHop culture commingled with downtown gallery hipsters, one terrific two-page photo shows Dondi and skateboarder (and Wild Style actress) Patti Astor at a downtown opening, complete with fine wine and a suave Jean-Michel Basquiat looking to be looked at in the background. Dondi's pieces from this period are unsettling and menacing. At first they seem uncomfortable and tentative on canvas, but with pieces like *Anno Domini* or *Psychological Suspense* it was clear that his minimalism was by choice. Given the fabled childhood of school and church that Witten and White describe, Dondi's juxtaposition of religious and B-boy iconography as well as his interest in gallery exhibition, seemed a natural progression.

By the time he died in 1998, Dondi White had done everything a one-time 'vendit' could ever hope for. Ultimately, Dondi fell victim to the AIDS crisis that had grown up and flourished alongside his beloved culture, and in this regard he was as much a victim of New York as he was an exemplar of the city's wide-eyed, rag-to-riches possibilities.



Blazing the drums: Alan Licht (left), Santerla singer (right)

AN EMOTIONAL MEMOIR OF MARTHA QUINN ALAN LICHT

DRUG CITY PRK \$11.95
BY BLEDDYN BUTCHER

For those who didn't grow up on the MTV 16, the title may require explanation: Martha Quinn is the girl-next-door VJ to whom New York avant-garde guitarist, writer and Web contributor Alan Licht attributes his fondness for winched 80s pop. If she is the book's patron saint, the Thompson Twins' "Hold Me Now" provides its unlikely malediction. Hearing this aesthetic abomination on the radio for the first time in 14 years, Licht

recognises, with something very like schadenfreude, that "remembering every nuance of a 'bad' New Wave hit from the 80s... gives me more pleasure than remembering every moment of a favourite punk single!" A warring development by any stretch.

This book — "emphatic" better catches its flavour — charts his wondering response to this shock. He is not unapprehensive. He knows "better". Why isn't he mortified? The short answer is he grew up, the world changed and honesty somehow lost its cachet. Licht doesn't, of course, pump straight to this pale conclusion. Nor does he bang a polemic drum. He simply stops to consider his changing

attitudes, making tenuous connections which evoke both a generation and a period. His account is not so much Roemer's Story as Slacker's Riff. The confused cultural moment it catches is Our Very Own.

Licht, the self-declared "Teen Bando of Noise", is a versatile, restless musician (Love Child, Blue Humans, Run Or) and writer. His unusual tastes are balanced by a more general awareness of trends. He doesn't reject the past; he gathers its threads into contemporary sense. He notes, for instance, that, while electronics was potentially "more punk than punk" in its break with tradition, "computers continue the trend away

from communalism towards personal isolation"; that, while "acid produced a trip that induced spiritual awakenings", the Internet "has no religious overtones — it's mostly a bag mail". The argument's not unfamiliar — technological advance prompts spiritual renewal — but war is its intent. Licht's prose is full of good humour and sly denials. It doesn't take itself too seriously. Instead of loudly borrowing the current cultural impasse, Licht cheerfully anticipates change. He makes a convincing case with unforced immediacy.

So the Thompson Twins weren't a complete waste of time after all. □

DIVINE UTTERANCES: THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRO-CUBAN SANTERÍA KATHERINE J HAGEDORN

SAN DIEGO: UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRK + CD \$24.95
BY RICHARD HENRICHSON

Along with the rich musical heritage of West Africa's Yoruba civilisation, slaves brought to the Caribbean also imported the seeds of a syncretic religion known as Santería, the spiritual confluence of elements borrowed from Catholicism, traditional African worship of orishas (spirits) and a form of French spiritualism which gained currency in the Caribbean during the 19th century. The theatrical and musical liturgy of Santería, rich with African artefacts, are central to what is in essence a religious lingua franca, a faith shared by members of disparate tribes brought together in the New World. It is this component of the faith that fascinated Katherine J Hagedorn, author of *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería* and professor of music at Southern California's Pomona College, prompting her to study the distinctions between

Santería's sacred and secular elements and the social context within which its musicians, singers and dancers operate. Her journey to Cuba, the fountainhead of Santería as it is currently practised, and her apprenticeship as a bata drummer are integral elements of her ethnography.

The author prefaces each chapter with depictions of Santería's cosmology. Given the density of sociological, musical, economic and political information on every page of *Divine Utterances*, this device succeeds in keeping the essence of Santería close at hand. The rigour informing Hagedorn's analyses never overwhelms the lasting sense of awe instilled by her initial exposure to a folkloric troupe's bata drums when she was still a graduate student in the late 80s. Homeopathic tinctures of humour don't hurt either. The first portion of a chapter on religious tourism, devoted to the active role played by dead ancestors in the lives of Santería's practitioners, is subtitled "The Dead Find Parking in San Francisco". Those who have lived in vain without photosynthetic assistance may be pained for Santería's message.

Personal experience informs contemporary

ethnology in increasing measure. Whether this trend began in 1961 with Colin Turnbull's *The Forest People*, I can't say for sure. Suffice it to add that drama informs Hagedorn's field research: her Cuban apartment is ransacked (presumably in the name of state security); she loses a leg muscle while swilling an attacker on a Havana street, and, in an extended interview that threads through the chapter devoted to the groundbreaking group Conjunto Folklórico, she hears how her director María Teresa Linares survived being shot by a disgruntled member. And always, paranoia lingers in the humid Cuban air. Few acquaintances linger at the author's base of operations; tellingly, those colleagues who do visit admonish her not to speak of "La Berber" (the Berber, a colloquial reference to Castro). She reflects in numerous asides on the culture of self-hatred, carefully nurtured by the Cuban government.

A model of scholarly rigour, Hagedorn annotates her writings extensively, and her book's final pages contain an extensive bibliography, a filmography (referencing key documentaries by Les Blank and avant-garde choreographer turned voodoo priestess Maysa Deret) and an amazingly

cool glossary whose value to fans of Cuban music in any form cannot be understated.

Among the book's appendices is a three-page discography, including numerous recordings of Yoruba-derived drumming. The CD bundled within Hagedorn's book is also worthy of inclusion. Though several university presses continue to package CDs with their ethnomusicological titles, most fall down miserably in their presentation of them. *Divine Utterances* runs counter to the trend of hastily edited and sequenced discs. Hagedorn has taken pains to integrate the full-length selections of drumming and chanting found on the enclosed CD within the flow of her narrative. In addition to the track list following the table of contents, bulleted captions inserted within her text prompt the reader to cue up an appropriate selection. The CD contains, in the larger measure, on-site takes from Cuba and Southern California, many of these feature a group led by Francisco Aguabella, Hagedorn's drum teacher. These crisp, spacious recordings deliver the full intensity of Afro-Cuban liturgical music. Being unique to *Divine Utterances*, the CD alone more than justifies the book's cost. □



Rowl time for Kenneth Anger (left); Great time for Dylanesque Tenthara (right)

MOONCHILD: THE FILMS OF KENNETH ANGER
JACK HUNTER (EDITOR)
 CREATION BOOKS PRK \$11.95
 BY BAMA KOPFF

Hard to believe that Kenneth Anger, underground film icon, magus and insatiable chronicler of Hollywood Babylon, is now in his seventies; difficult to conceive of any other immortal filmmaker — pre-war French anarchist Jean Vigo aside — whose status is founded on a body of work consisting of the six completed films of his Magick Lantern Cycle, with a combined running time barely exceeding that of a single full-length movie. Slim it might be, but the Anger corpus contains more than enough to sustain the best yet stimulating study. Though Moonchild's three contributors keep a tight focus on the films themselves, they contain enough biographical traces of their maker to illuminate an extraordinary life. Born in 1930 and a former child actor who purportedly starred in Max Reinhardt's 1935 movie version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Anger was weaned on the glamour, vulgarity and decay of Hollywood, the rottenness of which he went on to gleefully document in two scabrous volumes of Hollywood Babylon.

Anger had already made a number of shorts before he went public at the age of 17 with *Fireworks* (1947), his astonishing 15 minute debut film staving himself as the Dreamer dreaming up his own homoerotic rite of passage at the hands of the sailors he approaches for a light. Its overt homoeroticism and gauche yet witty symbolism defied Hollywood prudency and hypocrisy, in the process branding Anger as a sexual outlaw. Like he cared. Not even as he sentenced himself to a life in the margins, traveling the globe in pursuit of his arcane interests and funding, he has never entirely forsaken Hollywood-incubated production values or its taste for voluptuous images, as revealed in the surviving 1949 fragment *Pucka Moment*. Quick to pick up on *Fireworks*'s debt to his own *Blood Of A Poet*, French film poet Jean Cocteau mailed Anger to Paris and vainly attempted to help him get versions of Lautréamont's *Malincoir* and Pasolini's *Riagari* the Story Of O up and running. Anger managed to complete two shorts in Europe — *Exorc D'Artifice* and *Rabbit Moon* — before returning to America and dedicating himself more fully to cinema as magick ritual.

As an acolyte of the English magickian Aleister Crowley, he came to see film making as a way of casting spells. In the process, Anger's Cocke-

like cinema of enchantment transformed itself into an all-out "assault on the senses", as he puts it. From the outset, as a film maker he had rejected dialogue and narrative conventions. To mount his assaults, he enlisted evocative brilliant montage strategies out of the advanced theories of Soviet film pioneers Sergei Eisenstein and Dada Vertov, juxtaposing image and sound, light and shade and multiple superimpositions of images to erect the extraordinary orgiastic party of *Invocation Of The Pleasure Dome* (1964), cut to the voluptuous organ swirls and ecstatic drumming of Janacek's *Glagolitic Mass*.

His best known film, *Scorpio Rising* (1963), intertwines a bike's machine and leather fetishism with images of Marlon Brando from *The Wild One* and a Z-grade Jesus movie, cut to a lovingly chosen girl group soundtrack whose lyrics run like a commentary on the action, viciously mocking and glorifying it. The close reading Carol Rowe's essay, "Blue Velvet", gives to *Scorpio Rising* underscores the brilliance of Anger's montage of contrasting and complementary attributes. Rowe makes clear how his uncanny grasp of the feminine emotional dynamic of American teen pop permitted him to simultaneously contrast and intensify the film's masculine and masochistic death drives through

the soundtrack's pie-up of rockabilly elegies.

After Rowe's lucid examination of Anger the montage wizard, Anna Powell's "A Torch For Lucifer" chapter unpacks the symbolism through which he enacts his movies' magical transformations. Her keys to the symbols used in the late 60s *Invocation Of My Darned Brother* (featuring an abrasive Moog soundtrack by Mick Jagger) and *Lucifer Rising* (1961, remake after his 1960 version was lost or stolen) are especially enticing for non-initiates. These pieces are bookended by an introduction, "Force And Fire", which makes a convincing pitch for Anger's cinema of correspondences — how his montages effect the transformation of noise and image into magick ritual — and a filmography, annotated by Anger himself, which maps up the surviving fragments of lost or incomplete projects.

Since *Lucifer Rising*, Anger has been refining, reediting and sometimes even rescoring his Magick Lantern Cycle, while occasionally presenting the work in person around the world. If Anger had ever been a career for Anger, such unproductivity would be alarming. Since he views his films as magical tools to trigger his assaults on the sensuous, their undiminished power gives him no cause to invent new ones. □

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

MERZ NITE LONDON VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

BY PHILIP CLARK

As a piece of political theatre this event, inspired by the work of Dadatu Kurt Schwitters, could hardly have been more successful. Organised by Wire contributor Ben Watson, it aimed to take the best London's 'free' improvisation scene has to offer out of draughty rooms at the top of pubs and into the V&A foyer to "celebrate free museums, direct-access culture and unconstrained, spontaneous expression". The word 'Merz' was mainly torn from a poster advertising Hanser's Kommerz unter Privat-Bank and the term became a 'concept' or even a way of life, rather than a generic category. Schwitters applied it to all of his clothes, poetry and sculptures, and the fact that this work walked against the status quo became more important than the medium it represented something

snatched back from the institutionalised commercial world he so despised, and Watson claims that now "only free improvisation can rise to Merz's libertarian programme".

The evening began with the production of collaged postcards by a large team of fellow travellers who sketched what unlikely meanings they could from magazines of various persuasions. They were assembled of a board and will eventually be exhibited in the new dome at the V&A. As they worked, bottles of lager were sold for £3 (no credit!) while someone in the foyer threw a scruffy overcoat into the air, picked it up and looked quizzical before launching it above his head again. The atmosphere was punctuated by blasts from DJ Dallas Böcher, meanwhile, a bedogged figure holding on one crutch kicked an odd pair of shoes around the floor. Anticipation grew as the musicians started to arrive. The plan was to have the audience walk around them, so doing providing their own sonic landscape.

Unfortunately so many people turned up that there was no room to move, forcing the audience to set like coked-out doves. Rhodie Davies looked on anxiously as spectators crowded the performance space, worrying that someone might knock his harp over. First up to the podium was trombonist Gail Brand. She needed to be burst of sampled sounds coming through large speakers with furios, plunger muted growls that sounded like Bubba Miley crossed with Miles Davis's wah-wah pedal. If Davies and bassist Simon Fell actually played anything to accompany her, I couldn't see or hear what. But they were certainly there.

Walking around the edges, I took advantage of a momentary gap in the crowd and allowed my way into another concave. The next talent gawled Pat Thomas was at the back but I couldn't hear a note. However, the extraordinary bassoon yelps of Mick Beck were difficult to miss. Beck uses the bottom of the instrument as a springboard for strained harmonies and he's belled the

instrument into expressing his ideas. I tried to focus on his playing but was frustrated by the surrounding din. Other listed musicians like saxophonist Caroline Kizabab and percussionist Chris Cutler either didn't show up, or more likely, I didn't manage to find them.

For a few minutes I did stumble across Lei Coughlin and Gail Brand weaving short strands of extraordinarily muscular counterpoint around one another. Musically the event was tripped up by the dazzling success of its sociopolitical agenda. I can't imagine any other Wire correspondent has ever complained that too many people turned up to a free improvisation gig. A more formalist approach would certainly have let the musicians communicate with one another in a more meaningful way, but perhaps that wasn't the point. Watson himself leapt on to the central podium at one point to make some poetry but was drowned out – a metaphor perhaps for the poet screaming against a society that won't or can't listen. □

CANNIBAL OX & AESOP ROCK SAN FRANCISCO JUSTICE LEAGUE

USA
BY JON WELDON

Conversation at a packed house suddenly ceases as Aesop Rock's wicked "Nickel-Plated Pockets", from his recent Daylight EP booms from the speakers. It's a proper warm-up, showcasing the unapologetically cynical HipHop collective known as Def Jux. The production from leader in adjacent R-P further, while Cannibal Ox's Vast Aire plays a hapless, homeless beggar and Aesop, the emcee/producer, steals lines from Can Dis's rap. It rumbles with a post-industrial angst in the backdrop of white NYC alienation, where "a city full of World Trade Center victim candle vigils" is merely another harsh urban detail.

The trio of Vast Aire, Vordul McGlah and Aesop Rock (an amusing, un-HipHop mouthful of esoteric names) saunter to the stage, disaffected B-boy stances, cooing HipHop attitudes. Vast, a boyish band, comically holds an almost empty bottle of Maker's Mark whiskey, sheepishly ginning behind a crooked baseball bat and an immense physical presence. Aesop creeps forward, looking wrecked and shady in every sense, hood pulled over a crooked fish-mesh Pepsi hat, one beady eye visible, the other

hidden in shadow. His beard is every bit as straggly and patchy as, say, Luke Vibert, whose story bedroom experiments parallel Aesop's bested busy babies in other ways as well. Vordul, married simply by his clean, athletic presence, mimics his verses from "Stress Rap" spun by Aesop's Family DJ Sips One. This is their third Bay Area concert in six months, a fact suggesting that they're aiming towards a roots-like live ethic, but it feels more like a capitalisation on newfound notoriety than anything resembling The Roots' dynamism.

Despite, or perhaps as a result of, their obvious isolation, they grab the mic's running, relying on their vocal strength and R-P's percussion to carry the composition, where stage theatrics are held to a minimum. They perform together, alternating between each other's tunes and assisting each other on back-to-back vocals. Bouncing between new and old tunes, Aesop is the most energetic and eager, while Vast clearly enjoys his clever wordplay but too often lingers behind his crooked hat. Sly and reserved, Vordul does his job, riding the beat with a straightforward intensity, much like the album. The music remains evenly entrenched in R-P's sweetly beamed beats and rough, metallic textures, with occasional anthemic horns and growling riffs twirling along. While R-P's production threatens to overshadow the Cannibal

On MCs on Cold Vets, it sounds great live, creating an interlocking, post-apocalyptic, vacuum-packed space in an accommodated tight Justice League. It dominates the mood, forcing the MCs to carry their weight or be lost under the pressure. A jagged, searing beat from "Raspberry Fields" almost loses the less adventurous, even as Vast rides it swiftly, smirking through lines like "Oh my god, said a word twice, last time, twice as now". Sips One does speak in R2D2's unmistakably slow "Gawful (Click Click)" built from The W album, which fits awfully well, and the trio handle it comfortably.

Aesop Rock dominates throughout, his crackly baritone vocal audibly never missing, his timing impeccable and his urgency waging on the neurotic. Do an unscripted freestyle he saves a floundering Vordul – Cannibal Ox are too tired to resurrect spontaneous energy – and concludes it with a verse so tight and clean you'd think it was from his album. It's the contrast between looking like he's just crawled from a Buick's novel while exclaiming "Joyce Kilmer walking with machine-like accuracy that make Aesop such a fascinating performer. If anything, though, his pace that's the most challenging.

Hammering home B-boy attitude during their most conversational moment, Aesop and Vast introduce "Bombard" from Aesop's Labor Days with a declaration about their memories of

bombombs. You know, the ones that have a cassette still stuck in one of the docks, the ones that have broken "Play" buttons, the ones that roared off that classic Wu Aesop then tears into the Wu-Tang-influenced beginning – "Raw, I'm a gee it to ya, no know, now like Aesop Rock's not fished his militia." He then pulls in the crowd with the "Boom, boom, boom" chorus. Even near the end, the crowd is entertained, held by a thread of some nostalgia.

These new anti-heroes represent everything great about HipHop: a refreshing innocence and an unpretentious style that's still aggressively dystopian. The touring of Can Dis and Aesop Rock – somewhat like Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in *Lethal Weapon*, Samuel Jackson and John Travolta in *Pulp Fiction*, even Jay-Z and Eminem on *The Blackprint's* stunning "Regulate", but more like Mr. Lon, Bigg Jus and R-P in *Company Flow* – proves to be captivating, especially to an indie crowd. They offer a disaffected HipHop that's both easy to grasp and difficult to hang on to, drawing on, while challenging, an urban tradition – nostalgic yet avant garde. A definitive juxtaposition. □

Merz herts (top and bottom left): Gail Brand and Rhodie Davies; Wire Fest and dancer Jennifer Pike. Bottom right: Cannibal Ox's Vast Aire and Aesop Rock in San Francisco



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ARIZ - JOURNALISM CENTER

On Location



Left to right: Installations by Pameela Marshall, CM Von Hasselhoff, James Griesford and Petter Nissen, Ryoji Kudo, and Carsten Nicolai at Frankfurt's Frequencies [H2]

FREQUENCIES [H2] FRANKFURT SCHIRM KUNSTHALLE GERMANY

BY BEN BORTHWICK

Frequencies [H2], a rolling series of exhibited works and weekly electronics performances at Frankfurt's Schirn Gallery, is a welcome step toward the maturation of the "sound art" exhibition. Nevertheless, to some degree it remains stymied by being organized around a premise that is fundamentally reductive. This was underpinned by the Schirn's director Max Hollein who, in his opening speech, emphasized the importance of continually seeking out new markets like sound art, inadvertently pointing to the entrenched formalism that is endemic throughout museum culture, not to mention the problematic economic model he was wielding. However, despite the "sound art" label that will linger around any show like this, there is a unifying theme that reaches beyond formal characteristics. Reaching across the curatorial, installation and excellent performance programme (see Out There), the theme of revealing not immediately discernible systems rooted in a number of different ways. On the most basic level, most of the exhibits have parallel identities as recording artists who are all

part of a larger electronic music network, remaining each other's work, collaborating on projects and/or sharing tracks on one another's labels.

The exhibition space is a series of walk-through rooms connected by an elongated corridor that creates a loop. Even though the walls are covered in white foam squares for sound reduction, there is plenty of spillage from one space to the next, turning the exhibition into a meta-sound environment, roughly divided into zones of low frequencies, high frequencies, and narrative. In the context of Carsten Nicolai's monumental physics sculpture, *Frozen Water* (2002), which shows the effects of low frequencies on water, or Torumi Griesford and Petter Nissen's *Abstraktion* (1996), which reveals the fluctuating presence of radiation in the atmosphere, the white walls, floors and ceiling seem like some sort of future lab environment. Carl Michael Von Hasselhoff continues this quasi-scientific approach with *Parasitic Electronic Space* (1997-2002), which jacks the museum's electrical current and presents it through a sound system and as an oscilloscope image projected on the wall. This piece seems to play the hermetic enjoyment of examining its medium of production, but it simultaneously opens up the contradictory

trajectory of electricity's mystical tradition as a medium for making contact with the other side. Just as Nicolai's installation sends reverb-echoes throughout bodies and objects in the museum, Austrian Franz Pommer's installations locate the body as an auditory receptor. This somewhat image of body as ear is enacted in the cylindrical *Halsbude* (2002). A deep subwoofer tone permeates the entire body to the point that the vocal chords are subject to interference, making the voice sound like a crude digital voice simulation. The full extent of the sonic environment only hit me on leaving the chamber when I came suddenly depressed, leaving me feeling nauseous.

In an anechoic and literal attempt to bring down the mystical notion, Mark Bain's *Pill* (2002) is a large metal cylinder with oscillators that mimic the resonance of the architecture. Over a period of time there is potential for a kind of phagocytosis as the frequencies engulf, destabilize and ultimately devour the architecture like white blood corpuscles attacking a virus. The small nature of *Pill* means it has been installed outside in a small pavilion, just in case its suicidal impulse fulfills its destructive potential and causes the host building to collapse.

The exhibition benefits from these pieces being

thrown into relief by works from Knut Adam and Ultra-red, which deal with various problematic social and economic phenomena. Adam's *United* (2002) is an elliptical spoken word narrative overlooking a place of post-war architecture and Roman ruins as it meditates on the relationship between subjectivity, power and city space. Ultra-red's *Impassable Beach* (*Saltina De Vitor No 8*) (2001-2) is a short video, projected into the lobby window, showing the heavily fortified American border with Mexico. Seen from the street outside the museum, the images are accompanied by the sounds of anti-globalization protests in Quebec, thereby creating space in which these disparate geopolitical sites are linked. However, from inside the image is inverted, there is no soundtrack other than the ambient sounds of the lobby, a metaphor perhaps for Western governments' increasing isolation from voices of dissent within and beyond their borders. Throughout the exhibition Ultra-red have secured a series of commercial slots on local radio, and on 26 April they will collaborate with local artists on a performance. While the declared target of change is the macro socio-economic environment, the potential of these strategies for transforming institutions on the macro level of the art world should not be overlooked. [F]

AFTER THE LOOP: POST-TECHNO AND THE LOGIC OF REPETITION NEW YORK PS1 USA

BY ELIZABETH VINCENTELLI

It's a testimony to New York's dedication – and, some might say, madness – that a fair number of them based a showman to listen to five met, each one half-hidden behind an open laptop, labelling on about topics such as "the fetishization of the record." In conjunction with an exhibition titled *Loop*, PS1 Contemporary Arts Center organised a panel to cover "The relevance of the loop as a music making strategy in contemporary techno music and the alternatives to the loop found in the 'post-techno' aesthetic." As is often the case with these things, the event was more interesting for what it omitted than for what it discussed.

By inviting four men – Taylor Deshpande, Jason Williams (aka Velocette), Chris Sattinger (aka Timebinder), and Todd Hysan, founder of the Carpark label – all of whom make or champion variations on beep and clock techno and Microhouse, the organisers and moderator, Wile coordinator Philip Sharkey, unwittingly exemplified the increasing compartmentalisation and ossification of the electronic scene. There was no small amount of absurdity in the fact

that we were listening solely to people whose music has no discernible aka shaking powers, as they ponderously talked about moving beyond the 4/4 beat and its "fascistic" aspects, as Shorkey put it. That the organisers neglected to invite dance producers – coincidentally, House and Techno luminaries Glenn Vivat and Felix Da Housecat were playing later the same night – was no wonder than anything a laptop could behead.

Shorkey started by pointing out that "talking about the loop in electronic music is like talking about air in the outdoors." But what makes a loop work as such anyway? It soon became clear that repetition itself did not appear to be these musicians' real concern. Addressing the often repeated accusation that electronic music is too easy to make, Sattinger defensively replied that he studied classical composition, overlooking the fact that the accusation isn't usually made by academics looking for cultural validation, but by musicians in traditional pop groups. And so the real antagonism seemed to be not between loop and linearity but between modes of production and the creative process they engender.

Shorkey quoted Morton Feldman as saying that "process itself might be called the zeitgeist of our age." Of course, feminists have been ranting on the importance of process for years,

but the panelists sounded as if they'd just had a lightning bolt. Since the early 1970s, the women's movement has emphasised the importance of process over result – arguably leading to act-as-art itself as a by-product of self-realisation. A direct consequence has been what home electronics is now going through: the integration of the mistake (or the glitch, in digital terms) into the music making process. Shorkey mentioned an article that argued that "music has become a central concept in all kinds of electronic music." But the panelists said "failure" and "experimentation" interchangeably if you are to call it an unintended result that doesn't fit notions of what's acceptable in music, failure is, by definition, accidental, tying to homes in as procedure is antithetical to its essence. It was also somewhat ironic to hear men praise failure as a creative tool, when for years technical ability (and the lack thereof) has been used by male musicians to put down female ones.

Towards the end of a session that was getting increasingly bogged down in procedural clutter, a woman in the audience remarked that loops are used in experimental video but that in order to avoid ending up with screensavers, many video makers avoid pure abstraction and incorporate irony and social commentary. Sattinger pointed out that musicians don't have

that problem; unfortunately, many listeners might disagree, describing his music as an aural screensaver, or perhaps the music played on an elevator that to the Seventh Circle of Digital Hell. At that point, one could not help but think about Carousell, an artefact in PS1's *Loop* exhibit. A 1999 piece by German artist Carsten Hoeller, it consists of a cassette tumbled to move at a glacial pace, with a note explaining that "in the end, the slowed down merry-go-round is just a ride that doesn't go anywhere." Well, a merry-go-round doesn't go anywhere, so matter how fast it is rotating. Is Microhouse going anywhere? And does it need to go somewhere to be artistically art – or perhaps the thought – socially and political relevant?

Joan Accolla, writing in *The New Yorker* about recent dance works by William Forsythe (who set one of his pieces to Gavin Bryars's up-loop piece *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*) and Pina Bausch, criticised them for relying too much on repetition. Pointing out that the choreographer's "inflexibility to the notion of development seems to me a renaissance of intelligence," she suggested narrative as a creative way out. Could the process have been a red herring all along? That we were back to square one, thinking about something as old fashioned as repetition versus sequential progression, may have been the last loop of them all. [F]



BRIGITTE FONTAINE
LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
UK

BY ROB YOUNG

Here she ever comes now, shuffling onto the Royal Festival Hall stage draped with a scarlet burkiah, like a shambling pillar of blood. 30 years and then some since her debut album *Brigitte Fontaine Est...*, those three enigmatic dots are still to be properly filled in.

It's not entirely inappropriate, that the opportunity to serenade her comrades across the English Channel — her first ever appearance in Britain — should come as support aid to Anglo-French Moogse boogie bubbling group Stars of the 80s. After all, the Lab's split single with Fontaine a few years ago was a small gesture in rehabilitating her reputation and rescuing her memory from being lumped together as just

another Gaslovi-husky chanteuse. And the Lab's own aesthetic and reference points, at least in their early days, pointed towards the source of Fontaine's coming into being: the revolutionary ferment of late 60s Paris, and its peculiar conflagrations of protest and introspection, *musique concrète* and bubblegum, Marxism and Situationism, anarchistic theatre and impromptu street actions. Yet it has proved hard for Fontaine's art to translate, and even in France she is reportedly widely misunderstood. Three decades on, it seems the beach that lay just under the pavement has hardened into just another layer of concrete.

As her appearance in London shows, though, Fontaine has proved a hardy, durable survivor, undergoing something of a reinvention in the 90s. Once the burkiah is thrown off, her

skinhead and stick-thin frame is revealed. Yet there's nothing anorexic about her voice. An impatient, raw warl and yammer that transmits the unhinged urgency of a Puff to the bonedoms. Beginning promisingly with a modal number sung across a droning rock waltz, reminiscent of Susan Deyhm, she runs through a vanity pack of past and present songs. That voice is served — not always to best advantage — by a group of what sound like highly competent but slightly heavy handed session musicians. She is, though, accompanied on percussion by her long standing musical partner Anski, a solid yet not overrated presence on *debocks* and *compas*. Youthful numbers from *Comme À la Radio* are amplified phantasmically through the voice's accumulated grit, and always concluding with a flourish, a tableau of awe.

At times the vocal lizzes to the point of

hystera, a screaming and gabbling that takes her voice into the domain of sound poets such as François Ouhrine and Henri Chopin. Songs from her 2001 LP *Kokeland*, which was recorded with a clutch of hand picked collaborators including Sonic Youth, actually turn out to be some of the more memorable from this set. It also marks a move towards singing in English. "I am God's nightmare," she repeats tongue in cheek, almost as a talismanic chant against any suspicion of mellowing with age. Judging by the wiry, sneaky energy she displays tonight, Brigitte Fontaine plans to be troubling the Creator's sleep patterns for many years to come.

Unveiled: Brigitte Fontaine's British debut at London's Royal Festival Hall

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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts. Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk Compiled by Phil England



Yo La Tengo at Only Connect; Caribbiel Or at ATP

UK Festivals

LOVEBYTES

SHEFFIELD

The annual festival which encourages artists to explore the creative potential of new technology has a host of new commissioned work as well as a music programme. The latter includes Japan's Yasuhiro Tane, Meg's Massimo, Robert Lippok, Scanner, Freeform, plunderphonics kitcho from People Live Us, Techno from Baby Food and digital abstraction from Gessom. Commissions include Hanso Ishii's immersive environment of 550 ringing bells and tiny lights, a palindromic video by Steve Hawley, found audio-visual materials recontextualised by People Live Us, and Alex Pavetti's pixelated patterns fused with electronic audio. Sheffield various venues, 14-16 March, festival pass £50/£35, 0114 221 0393, www.lovebytes.org.uk

ONLY CONNECT

LONDON

The Barbican Centre's annual series of new collaborations and special projects. Marianne Faithfull performs songs from her new album *Asses' Time* (10 March); John Zorn premieres *The Gift*, with a group that includes New York luminaries Dave Douglas, Marc Ribot and Joey Baron (25); Billy's Damon Albarn appears alongside musicians he met and recorded with on a recent DfM sponsored visit to Mali, including Ali Farka Touré protégé Mli Boccoom (26); Senegalese superstar Baaba Maal is united with producer Wade B and Fourth World trumpeter Jon Hassell (5 April); Craig Armstrong performs songs from his first album with the London Sinfonietta and various guests (7 April); New Jersey's Yo La Tengo provide live soundtracks to the short films of French director Jean-Pierre L  aud (20); Iceland's Sigur R  s and Hlmar

  n H  msson perform a new work based on a lost chapter from Norse legend the Edda, which features arrangements for orchestra and choir (21); and Mouse On Mars, Plaid and Del perform new and old works to large projections of computer game graphics (27). London Barbican, times/proms vary, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

International Festivals

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

USA

The rescheduled Sonic Youth-cast festival promises to be the event of the year. The dream line-up includes the Youth alongside Bonedogs, Remission, Caribbiel Or, Dead C, Tony Conrad, Jackie O Motherfucker, Ikuu Mori, G  t Taylor, Pasmore, Rita, Aphex Twin, Scissor Kingz, Kevin Current, Leah Singh, Stordach and many others. Look out for *The Wire* stand. Los Angeles UCLA, 14-17 March, \$100, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

THE 12TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL WITH NO FANCY NAME

USA

Part two of Phil M  bbeck's annual experimental music festival at his loft performance space, otherwise known as the Experimental Intermedia Foundation. Guy De Bevere performs "Crossroads/Invocacion" for live microphone feedback (4 March), "up—up—up" features a film screening and music collage of Jim O'Rourke (15); Anne Weimer's "Mappings&3" (16); Elgn Feinberg's "UnReal" interactive installation claims to enable the user to feel their "post-biological" condition (18). Michael Northam presents his manipulations of carillon, chimney whistle,

cactus, obsidian and other sonic debris (9), and Nicolas Collins harnesses the "Voice in 'Sirel Oog'" (11). New York Experimental Intermedia Foundation, 001 212 431 5127, experimentalintermedia.org

ARCHIPEL FESTIVAL

SWITZERLAND

Festival exploring the relationships between music and space and sound and vision, featuring artists working with sampling and musique concr  te, installations and performance. Performers include Luc Ferrari, John Oswald, Christine Kabisch, Francisco L  pez, Xavier Charles, Dominique Potangond, Yoshitaka Taira, Ikuu Mori, Martin T  p  ut, Diane Labrosse, as well as music by Luciano Berio and Morton Feldman. Geneva Maison Communale de Musique, 16-24 March, 00 41 22 329 2422, www.archipel.org

DIN

IRELAND

Sound art exhibition which aims to be the most wide-ranging exposition of contemporary electronic music ever mounted in Ireland. Listeners can select sound works from 753 artists including John Cage, Ikuu Mori, Karl H  m, François Bayle and DJ Spooky and listen on headphones or stereo speakers. Includes many exclusive and specially commissioned works as well as a showing of *Catch 44*, a video by John Cage. Dublin Arthouse, until 30 March, free, 00 3 53 1 605 6800, www.artspace.ie

HEINER GOEBBELS FESTIVAL

NETHERLANDS

Two day festival dedicated to the work of the music theatre composer featuring performances by Les Percussives De Strasbourg, extended vocalist David Moss, Blindman Saxophone Quartet, AS&D Ensemble, art Ernst Storzner and Heiner Goebbels himself. The programme

includes Stadt Land Fluss, ...m  me voir, extracts from Sonagata Cultes, Herosites 2 and La Jalousie. Rotterdam Theater Lantaren/Verster, 22-23 March, 00 31 1 02 772286, www.lantaren-verster.nl

MAERZMUSIK

GERMANY

Major festival featuring Zeligzer's live premiere of Lou Reed's noise classic *Metal Machine Music* (see Special Events); a John Cage event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of "433" featuring performances, films and installations; a DVD installation of La Monte Young and Mason Zappa's *The Well Tuned Piano In The Magenta Lights*; a performance of Stockhausen's *Michael's Youth* from his opera *Light*; Zeligzer and Shelley Hirsch perform Christian Marclay's *Grafito Composition* conducted by Ulrich Morris; plus The Necks, James Tenney, Sven-Ake Johansson, Stephen Scott's *Musik For Sowed Plants* and more. Berlin various venues, 7-17 March, 00 49 30 254 890, www.maezmusik.de

OBlique LU NIGHTS

FRANCE

Youth looking festival featuring Michael Gra, People Live Us, Jac Berrocal, Genesis P Oudg, Coleman from Biechdom, Ikuu Mori & Jim Kuno, John Oswald, Jim T  p  ut, Th  twell & Jim Coleman, Elan D  n  s, Simon Fisher James, F  dd-23 March, www.oblique.lu

OTHER MINDS FESTIVAL 8

USA

Three days of concerts and artists forums. Featured artists include Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, Ellen Fullman, Anne Lockwood and Richard Teitelbaum. San Francisco, various venues, times and prices, 7-9 March, 001 415 392 4400, www.otherminds.org

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



CONTEMPORARY MUSIC NETWORK 2003/2004 SEASON

The Arts Council of England's Contemporary Music Network (CMN Tours) is devoted to presenting a year round programme of the most exciting and innovative music productions to diverse audiences across the country.

Each year CMN selects 10 - 12 high quality tours, performed by artists of national and international stature, covering the widest possible spectrum of contemporary music.

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For guidelines and an application form please go to the CMN web site www.cmntours.org.uk or contact us by letter 020 7973 4493 (e-mail cmntours@arts council.org.uk) (post) CMN Tours, The Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter St, London, SW1P 3RD

The Arts Council has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

The closing date for 2003/2004 applications is Tuesday 16th May 2002



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a series of extraordinary live events

Friday 5 April

Howie B / Jon Hassell / Baaba Maal with John Bessley
Three disparate but exceptional musical talents are reunited for this unique event. They are joined by keyboardist John Bessley.

Saturday 20 April

Yo La Tengo: The Sounds of Science

Yo La Tengo compose and perform a live soundtrack to the sensual and eerie underwater short films of French surrealist Jean Perleux.

Sunday 21 April

Sigur Rós & Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson: Odin's Raven Magic
New music for choir and orchestra, inspired by the Nordic fable Edda.

Saturday 27 April

Play: Mouse on Mars / Coil / Plaid

World premiere of new music inspired by the computer game, performed simultaneously to large screen enhanced computer graphics.

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www.barbican.org.uk

www.barbican.org.uk/onlyconnect



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- 16 **HULL** Adelphi Club 01482 216446
- 17 **MANCHESTER** Band on the Wall 0161 237 5554
- 19 **COLCHESTER** Arts Centre 01206 500900
- 20 **LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall 020 7960 4242
- 21 **READING** 21 South Street Arts Centre 0118 960 6060
- 22 **BRIGHTON** Concorde 2 01273 325440
- 23 **FAREHAM** Ashcroft Arts Centre 01329 310600
- 24 **EXETER** Phoenix 01392 667080



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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC





Acid Mothers Temple in London

YTOON! 3
NETHERLANDS
 Third edition of the Dutch festival for sound and image with electronics as raw material. Exhibitions by Redacted Technology Initiative and the Raster-Noton group, and performances by Tephro Animal, Kv606, Sigval, Porter Ricks, Fennaz, Jaga, David Shea, Parle Dahlstedt and Owl Branco (Bel). Hearlein venues venues, 6-10 March, www.toonfestival.nl

Special Events

CONCERT FOR AFGHANISTAN

UK
 Cross-cultural fundraising bash for the relief agencies – Core International, Medecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam International and Save The Children UK – working in the country that has been devastated by 20 years of war. The concert is led by legendary Afghan musicians Ustad Mahvesh, Ustad Mohammad Afi and Ustad Mohammad Asaf Mahmood, reunited for the first time after 15 years in exile. The bill also features Cheb Khaled, Ensemble Kaboul, Johnny Kals and The Ohol Foundation. London Royal Albert Hall, 14 March, 7.30pm, £300-£120, 020 7589 8212, www.royalalberthall.com

FILM INTO RETINA 2

Second programme of animation and experimental music features soundtracks by Lynn Casswell, Walter Carlos and Ian Hellwell's quadraphonic electronics for his film *Holies*. Brighton Cinematheque, 7 March, 8pm, £3.50/£3, 01273 384300

LOU REED'S METAL MACHINE MUSIC GERMANY, ITALY

The first ever live performances (recorded for amplified instruments) of Lou Reed's notorious noise classic, reworked by German New Music ensemble *Reaktor* (see *The Wire* 215). Reed will be in attendance for both performances. Berlin *Redner Festspiele*, 17 March; Venice Teatro Malibran, 20, www.reaktor.de

TAKING A LIFE FOR A WALK

UK
 A weekly series of half-hour performances by saxophonist Caroline Kraabel in which she will walk with her baby son through her inner London neighbourhood, playing improvised saxophone as she goes. The walks will also be broadcast live from 1 April onwards, when the London Musicians' Collective Resource FM station goes

on-air and online. Location and times are necessarily ad hoc, see www.l-m-c.org.uk

ANDY WARHOL'S SILVER FACTORY + FILM SEASON

UK
 To coincide with Tate Modern's Andy Warhol retrospective, Pop's Mark Webber has programmed an expanded cinema event at London's Scala. This night's centrepiece is a showing of Warhol's double-screen classic *Chelsea Girls*, which features the Factory all-stars and music by The Velvet Underground. Other Warhol films and footage on show include *Wavy! Luce and the Velvet Underground* & *Neo*, which shows the group rehearsing at the Factory, playing an extended improvisation, abruptly terminated by the New York Police Department. Filling the gaps between the films will be a roster of DJs including David Holmes, St Elienne's Bob Stanley and Pete Wags, the Wire's Edwin Pearson and Webber himself. Visual ambience from the Light Surgeons, plus special guest live performances and interventions. London Scala, 21 March, 8pm-2am, £8, 020 7887 8888. Webber also curates an exhaustive season of Warhol's films at Tate Modern, which continues this month. Full details at www.tate.org.uk/modern

GARETH WILLIAMS MEMORIAL CONCERT

UK
 To mark the recent sudden passing of the former *The Heart* member, a special concert including fellow *The Heart* members Charles Bullen and Charles Hayward, and a host of friends, collaborators and admirers including a reformed *Wim*, David Cunningham, Paul Hood, Jay Armstrong-Jones, Gheri: Sager, L'Voig, Mykal Patel, Mary Currie, Helen East, Nick Goodall, Dave Barnes, Alex Garaciotto, Simon Hants, Tary Marsh, Ian Hill, Viv Cunningham and Peter Cosulich, plus DJs Andrew and Howard Jacques (from *The Residents*), and Martin Harrison. London 93 Fort Esq, 7 March, 8pm, £12, 020 7247 3293, www.93fortesq.co.uk

On Stage

A CERTAIN RATIO + RICHARDO KIRK

To celebrate the release of *Soft Jazz's* post-punk/hip-hop retrospective in *The Beginning There Was Rhythm*, and the same label's forthcoming *A Certain Ratio* anthology, *Early*, the Manchester

death disco combo play their first gig in five years, with Cabaret Voltaire's Richard Kirk doing his intense audio-visual thing in support. Plus *Disco Andy Weatherall*, Playgroup's Trevor Jackson, Jerry Demmes and the Soul Jazz Sound System. London Elektower, 29 March, £10, 020 7494 2004

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE

Makoto Kawabata's unstoppable troupe of psychedelic troubadours keep on truckin' Glasgow 13th Note (28 March, with Richard Youngs), Birmingham Quacore Bar (3 April, with The Heads), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (5 April). Info: www.chunkyelectro.com

ASIAN BOY FOUNDATION

After travelling to Havana, Cuba with the support of the British Council earlier this year, the anti-imperialist pop pedagogues perform two special shows. The first features an Adrian Sherwood live dub set featuring Ghetto Priest and the massed drummers of The Obol Foundation in support. London Ocean, 21 March, £12, 020 8533 0111, www.ocean.org.uk. The second is a live performance to Matthew Kassa's film about Person youth culture and urban alienation, La Haine. Brighton Dome Concert Hall, 23 March, £12, 01273 709 709, www.brightondome.co.uk

DON BYRON

New York clannetist tours with both a daytime programme (not just for children, titled *Big Music For Juniors*, and an evening programme. *We Are#6: More Music For Six Musicians*. *We Are#6* includes Byron's take on Duke Ellington, Raymond Scott and John Kirby, with the performances accompanied screenings of the vintage cartoons for which the music was originally scored. *We Are#6* deals with Byron's Afro-Caribbean heritage in New York's Bronx. Bristol AnniFest (7 March), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (8-9), Birmingham MAC (10-11), London Barbican (12), Leeds The Warehouse (13), Mansfield Leisure Centre (14), Brighton Corn Exchange (15), Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall (16)

ANDREW CRONSHAW: ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR

A vivid evocation of the ancient musics of the frozen North from Finland to Siberia, on a CNN tour sponsored by The Wire. Newcastle Playhouse (5 March), Olden Thorpeby Riding Stables (6), Bracknell South Hill Park Arts Centre (8), Coventry Music Arts Centre (9), London

Queen Elizabeth Hall (10), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (13), www.cnnarts.org.uk

IVOR CUTLER

Limpid afternoons at the Lync with the inscrutable Scott. London Lync Theatre, 3 & 10 March, 2.45pm, £16, 020 8741 2311, www.lync.co.uk

FRIQGE

Sub-zero space rock. Cork Triskele Arts Centre (28 February), Dublin Shelter at Vicar St (1 March, with Jimmy Behan), Belfast Aubrey Aeries (3), Glasgow King Lits (4, with Capitol K), Manchester Roadhouse (5, with Capitol K), London Scala (6, with Capitol K and Mantrabot), Bristol Louisiana (7, with Capitol K and Mantrabot). Info: www.bramwashed.com/friqge

GOOSEPOO YOU BLACK EMPEROR!

Montreal's drone rollers play UK dates as part of a European tour. Brighton Corn Exchange Hall (18 March), London Ocean (18), Birmingham Que Club (20), Dublin Ambassador Theatre (22), Belfast Empire Theatre (23), Glasgow QMU (24), Bradford St George Hall (26), Newcastle University (27)

GUTBUCKET

Punk-jazz "compromisation" outfit showcasing their new *Knotting* factory album *Innocent's Dreams*. London Spex, 2 March, 7pm, £7, 020 7392 9032, www.spex.co.uk

RICHARDO HELL

New York punk original reads from his new collection of writings, *Hot And Cold*. London Upstairs at the Garage, 7 March, £5, 020 7607 1818

ANNA HOMLER & SYLVIA HALLETT

La Tope in voice artist teams up with UK string trio things improviser on a short tour. London 12 Bar Club (24 March), Leeds Adhops (28), Sheffield 78 Knigley Road (29), Liverpool Riverside Concert Hall (30)

INTERLACE

AMM guitarist John Tilbury performs Cage's *Electronic Music For Piano*, alongside live improvisations by Tom Chant, John Edwards & Eddie Priest. John Lyle, Manamati, Li-Chuan Chang, Denis Dobovozov & Sebastian Leiser. London Goldsmiths College Reel Room, 9 March, 7pm, 07932 568378

INSTANT MUSIC MEETING:

DIALOGUE 2

Personal favourites from the Tokyo quartet movement. Rishanaka Nakamura (on no-pump moving desk) & Sachiko M. (saxophone) are

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 San Francisco Chronicle

One of the great cellists of our time, Joan Jeanrenaud tonight performs for cello, electronics and video. The night includes some of her own compositions as well as works by Philip Glass, Yoko Ono, Kamei Tanaka, Steve Mackay and others.

NORTHERN EXPOSURE FROM ANDREW CRONSHAW'S ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR SUN 10 MAR 7.45PM QEH



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Sat 13 April
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La Linea 2002
London's
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Music
Festival



joined by fellow Tokyo wastards Ami Yoshida (vocals) and Ushio Kurosaki (analogous synth) on their UK debut, *London Spitz*, 27 March, Bpm, £7/65, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

KONK PACK

The red hot improvising trio of Tim Hodgkinson (reeds, electronics), Thomas Leek (analogous synth) and Roger Turner (drums) tour London Spitz (20 March, with Ivey's guitar; anti-theatre duo Sugimoto), Colchester Arts Centre (21), Derby (23), Leeds Theatre (24), Liverpool Art College (25)

KOPINSKI, KONIKIEWICZ & HARRIS

Excellent avant jazz trio led by ex-Pink Floyd saxophonist Ivey. 27 February, first of afternoon workshop at Leeds College of Jazz, Nottingham Binnington Gallery (28), Stanford Arts Centre (1 March), Bawley The Shed (2), Barbury The Mill (5), Gainsborough Trinity Arts Centre (6), Newcastle Corner House (7, plus afternoon workshop at Newcastle University)

PEMI KUTI & THE POSITIVE FORCE

Nigeria's Afro-luká superstar keeps his father's torch burning. London Ocean, 9 March, Q20 7314 2800, www.ocean.co.uk

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA

All-star massed ensemble performing conducted improvisations and new open-ended compositions. London Red Rose Cuts, 3 March, Bpm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

VLADIMIR MILLER & THE BRICK LAKE FILM ENSEMBLE

Miller and friends provide music to three short films from the Soviet era by Georgian director Mikhail Kobalidze. There's also poetry and music from The Mills Parsons Quartet and John Ray. London Starfield Courts, 31 March, Tpm, £7-£5.50, 020 8279 1001

NEOTROPIC

Heated North World electronic. London Spitz, 14 March, £5, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

NEW FLESH

Killer UK HipHop crew Cardiff Precinct (1 March), Bristol Theatre (2), Edinburgh Best Jazz Basement (8), Sheffield Fo Na Na (9), Belfast Butteryback Club (16), Brighton Ocean Rooms (22), Colchester Arts Centre (24 April), Dublin The Shelter (22 April)

NEW ITALIAN FUTURISTS

UK digital music performances by leading Italian noise/noise/futurism/futurism, Megro's Messisms, Alessandro 'Mugen' Canova and ZELLE, plus DJs. London, 29 February, 7 March, Tpm Tm, £5/£4, 020 7265 9760, www.editionsn.org

PEACHES & WHITE SPOXY

Rough Trade Shows presents the Ritty Yo synth-scholar plus live support, with sample-wearer Soles in the DJ booth. London Great Eastern Hotel, 9 March, £10 (£8 advance), 020 7289 3385

PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS

The talented LA HipHop duo's tour continues this month, Cardiff Ibbi Bach Club (1 March, early show), Birmingham Joe Club (1 March, late show), Brighton Concozette (2), Exeter Timepiece (3), Birmingham Consortium (4), Swansea University (5), Newcastle versus the (6), Leeds Wadrobe (7), London Defekt (8), Edinburgh Scotch (9), Aberdeen Law (10), Glasgow Arts Centre (11), Derby venue the (12), Nottingham

Bomb (13), Belfast Queens University (14), Cork Tenor Theatre (15), Dublin Peel (17)

OKARA PORTFOLIO

Beside Vesta Social Club singer on a short tour: London Barbican Centre (12 March), Leicester De Montfort Hall (13), Cork Open House (16), Dublin Gaiety Theatre (17), Brighton Dome (18)

SAND

York's noisy post-industrial combo celebrate the recent release of *50/50 Sam Allie* (Boul Jazz), playing to new films commissioned from award winning leftfield directors. London Metro Cinema, 7 March, Bpm, £5, 020 7734 1506

SONIC BOOM

Pete Kember's space rock rituals. London Spitz, 16 March, £8/£6, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

AKIO SUZUKI

Solo performance by the Japanese sound artist and Fluxus associate, offering ancient stone and clay flutes, and his own invented Analogue Instruments. London School of Oriental and African Studies, 27 February, Tpm, free, 07949 460 305

IAN WOBLE'S DEEP SPACE

Low end World fusion fusion. Norwich Arts Centre (28 February), Harlow The Square (8 March), Deal Astor Arts Centre (29), www.30hzrecords.com

Club Spaces

ALT.FREQUENCIES.V6

Electronic music night hosted by Worm Interface in an underground former public toilet in East London. Icarus and canconline live, plus DJs Ryo-Co, Reckit, Flying and Vix. London Public Life, 7 March, Tpm, free, 020 7375 2425, www.worminterface.com

AUDIT

Monthly night exploring new directions in electronic and improvised music. This month features a selection of melismatic including acoustic improv from cello and trumpet duo Mark Wastell & Matt Davis, digital music from the laptop of Antipodan Rohan Thomas, digital and concrete compositions from Ryoichi Sato Tomioke Sato, and glitch abstraction from Nish's Ben Drew. London The Clinic, 17 March, Bpm, £5 (includes free CD), 020 7734 9836

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Open-arms mix of pop and experimentation. This month's session features a performance of Gradual (described as 'slow-motion, de-focused chamber music') by Charles Hayward, Ashley Marsh, John Edwards & Jacqueline Grant plus free improvisation from Luis Corral, Robin Musgrave & John Edwards, voice, toys, bicycle wheels, stringed instruments and invented languages from The Bread & Shred duo of Anna Hoeller and Sylvia Hoeller, and laptop improvisers Mattin and Roy Parlaine in a trio with AMN's Eddie Pridout, and songs with accordion and electronics from MC Richard Sanderson. London 12 Bar, 24 March, Bpm, £5, 020 7916 6989, www.baggyrec.com

BREAKIN' BREAD

HipHop monthly with guest DJ Rock One, Chris Reed and Zia, guest MC Mad Flow, guest breakdancers Energy Squad from Hungary and Force 10 from East Anglia and resident DJs. London 4, 9 March, Bpm-4am, £7-£3, 01867 547 008, www.breakinbread.org

CRIMES OF THE FUTURE

A night of arcane electronic music on disc, from

Peter Schaeffer and John Cage to Eno and Nurse With Wound. Cardiff Owl Infer Bach, 11 March, 10pm-2am, £1, 02920 232199

EAT YOUR OWN EARS

Two events this month. The first is co-presented by Bella Union Records and features Departure Lounge live, plus a special DJ set from Kid Loco (6 March). The second is co-presented by the Kitz-Yo label and features live performances by Peaches, Taylor Senny, Laub, Turner, Maximilian Hecker and Trash Maker (aka Snakey Pimp) plus DJ Arthur Baker, Erol & Rory, Kitz-Yo DJs and special guests (8). London 93 Feet East, 8 March, Bpm-2am, £10/£8, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

EXTRA

Black sound, relaxed space, infomusic audio mutations. Expect digitalia, collage, soundscaping and leftfield electronics on decks and effects plus images by MAX and Flash, and videos by Rofrey, Jay Ropinsky. London The Foundry, 10 March, 3pm, free, 020 7739 6900, www.slowdown.net

FREE RADICALS

Regular free improvisation meeting. This month: London Bass The featuring Tony Wren, Mario Murtos & Simon Fell plus Mick Beck on bassoon. London Red Rose Club, 6 March, B 15pm, £5, 020 7263 7265

KOSMISCHE

Minotaur Shock and Junkbox appear live with Knutrock and more from DJ's Phillipa Philippa, Jay Backhouse and Mink Pelton. London Upstons at the Garage, 30 March, 9pm-3am, £5/£5, 020 7607 1818, www.kosmische.org

KLINKER

Improv and off-the-wall weekly this month features: Purgatory and Metcalfe's Microtonal Megastars (7 March); Dave Bryant, Enzo Rocco, Carlo Arto, Dodo, Robert Kluger, Anselmo Blosas, Roberto Bellatelli, Max Wyrner & Alfredo Ganesa (14); Chris Fayth & Ernesto Diaz-Infante, Daniel Weaver, Anna Hamler with Adrian Norrhorst & Dave Tucker, Snake Hips At The Halfway House, Will Evans, Mike Johns, David Leeshy and Hugh Metcalfe (21); Fias The Cat & His Cybexes, Dan Knight with Inflatable Philpino, M/O, The Volker, Simon H & Mark, Anghad Davies & Hugh Metcalfe (28); and Hugh Metcalfe, Tom Chant & Paul Hood, Busby and The Dukes Of Pouch (29). London The Sussex, Bpm, £4/£3, 020 8806 8216, www.theklinker.freeserve.co.uk

OPEN SOUL SURGERY

HipHop, funk and future House from Adam Child and vending consciousness. London Irving, 17 March, 5pm, free, 0207 326 4040

PLAY

Japanese/UK label FLIP celebrates the release of a new compilation, *Player*, and the start of a monthly after-hours club night. London Market Place, 13 March and second Wednesday of every month, Bpm-1am, free, 020 7019 2620

SOUND 323

Anonymous improvised music performances in the basement of this classy North London independent record shop. Keith Thompson & Dave Pullen (9 March), Daniel Weaver on cello and electronics (23), Ute Volker & Rhodi Davies (26). London Sound 323, 3pm, £3, 020 8348 9595

THE SPRAWL

Outdrains, soundscapes and eclectic sounds. This month features US-based installation and sound artists, J Frode, Marcus Leadley, Irene

London Musicians' Collective



London Musicians' Collective

KONK PACK +
David Sweeney
[20 March 2002]
Live at The Spitz, 109 Commercial Street, London E1
On Wednesday March 28th 2002 at 8pm The century our them all show inspire one of the finest talents, Tim Hodgkinson & Roger Turner Plus the music of King's, more-less guitar & string light of the 'Japanesque' look

REASONING VOLUME 9.2
THE FEEDBACK ISSUE
[March 2002]
Magazine & CD by
Karl Young
Nicolas Collins
Phil Durrant
Rob Pitt
Alan Lister
David Lee Myers
Thelma Nolasca
Barry Nichols
Michael Prime
Max Rogalsky
David Tabor & John Cages
Xenios

REASONING FM 1002
[April 2002]
"The best radio station in the world" (Village Voice) is back, with its unique mixture of radio and audio, radio, new music, and a wide range of radical programmes reflecting the amazing diversity and creativity of London's musicians and artists. Broadcasting from April 1st 2002 in central London.

YOUR FAVOURITE LONDON SOUNDS
PERIOD CONCO
[Just Now]
An hour-long annual record of this most musical of cities from 80s to 90s baggy, from screaming doors to the numbers of the Thames CD with bookies of 24 colour photos by Dave Mould. £10 inc p&p UK, £12 inc p&p elsewhere, direct from LMC.

www.l-m-c.org.uk

2002music1001

Out There

and David Brindley play resident DJs. Douglas Bonford and Ben Jones and vocals by Waveforms. London Global Club, 14 March, 7:30pm. www.djsite.com/sprawl/

STRANGE THINGS ARE AFOOT
Billy Childish performs his twisted and visceral garage blues, plus alternative rockers Montezuma Pista, broken songs from Croyola, songcraft from Gaudi, and acoustic songs from Caroline Mason. London 12-18 March, 7:30pm, £5/£4, 020 7916 6651

SWIM BEFORE
This month's name for the Bohman Brothers' regular 'improv/experimental space. Rest and Dave Ryan, John Edward & Mark Sanders (to 4 March), Sarah Tuskis & friends, Dave Fowler, Susan Hayman, GJ Wishnow & Julia Doyle, quarter and Simon Murray solo (11), The London Key Orchestra and The Bohman Brothers with Ian McLachlan (18), Ute Volker & Mark Wessell duo, Akiel Northover, Anna Homler & John Edwards trio (25). London: Upstairs at the Burlington Centre, Bpm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

XEN: SOLID STEEL
The Ninja Tune folk premiere birthday cake all round at the first anniversary of their monthly club. DJ sets from Arren Tobin, Bobrobo, Wagon Christ (aka Luke Vibert) and Pink. London: Cargo, 28 March, Bpm-1am, £7, 020 7379 3440

Incognito

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

UK
Organised by Steve Albini and featuring his current group Shellac, plus the Fall, Matt Bernato,

Bonnie 'Pleaser' Raby, Wm. Low, Cheap Trick, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Do Make Say Think, Zeni Geva, The Breeders, Raoh's and others. Cambridge: Sarsa Helway Centre, 19-21 and 26-28 April, £100, www.alltomorrowparties.co.uk

BIOS 02: PRESS PLAY! GREECE
Event that combines computer and video game culture with hard-edged electronics. Performers include Adult, Chicks On Speed, Pin Sonic, Funkstörung, Fennest, SND, Ploid and LFO, plus DJ sets by Pulsarjet and John Peel. Athens: IWE, 12-28 April, www.bios02.gr

DOMINO FESTIVAL BELGIUM
Annual festival this year featuring Godspeed You! Black Emperor!, Do Make Say Think, U2, DAF, Puffin, Lambchop, Cornish Dix and Mew Ladd live, as well as DJ sets, label showcases, screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art taken from the Wire's 2001 Inesdale London expo Brussels: Ancienne Belgique, 10-21 April, www.abconcerts.be

ETHER

UK
Five night event which attempts to increase the profile of various strands of new music, underground electronic music by presenting them in a concert hall environment. Performers include a quartet of Kim Gordon, Jim O'Rourke, Kate Men & O'Live, Pin Sonic meet Chicks On Speed, Jeff Mills (performing a live score to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*), Richie Hawtin, Radioboy Super, Coldcut, People Like Us, Felt Kubin, Mark Wessell, Collective, Layzboy, Gatos and Norico. Collective, London: Royal Festival Hall, 26 April-6 May, www.rfh.org.uk

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSICUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE CANADA

10th edition of this excellent avant music festival. Highlights include a new Keith Tippett composition for orchestra, a new collaboration between Merzbow and Pin Sonic, and a trio of Cecil Taylor, Bill Dauter and Tony Oxley. Victoriaville, 16-20 May, 001 819 752 7912, info@fmv.ca

FREEDOM OF THE CITY

UK
Second annual festival celebrating London's bustling improvised music scene. The line-up includes London Improvisers' Orchestra, John Tibbitt plays Samuel Beckett, Maggie Nicols, Nuts in May, Roger Smith, Benkey, Louis Mukoko, Phil Minton & Roger Turner, Trevor Watts & Vernon Watson, Sylvia Haller, Evan Parker & John Russell, Charlotte Hug & Pat Thomas, Les Coudill, Antje Lukoschewitz & Eddie Prévost, Resonance and the Ten Chant and OJ Food Inc. London: Conway Hall, 3-8 May, www.melchiorsonline.co.uk

LE WEEKEND

UK
US free jazz and Japanese avant rock dominate the event curated by Wire collaborator David Keenan. The line-up includes Shizuko, David S. Ware Quartet, William Parker (in conversation, as a duo with Harriet Drake, and with his quartet), Maher Shalal Hash Baz, and Kay Hano (solo and with Fushitashu). Starting tomorrow, 25-26 April, £39/£26 festival pass, £12/£8 day ticket, www.startingground.co.uk

TAKTLOS_02 SWITZERLAND

Switzerland
Swiss, at the University of Geneva. This year featuring Ex Orchest (The Ex with Jaap Blonk,

Wolter Wierbos, Michael Moore, Michael Volcher and others), Spahk, Louis Scialoja & Jean-Dominique, Shalabi Effect Quartet, Orchester 3/3, Tomoko Murayama and more. Basel: Gare du Nord, 18-20 April, and Zürich: Kulturzentrum Rotz Fabrik, 19-21 April, www.taktlos.com

TAMPERE BIENNALE FINLAND

New Finnish, electronic and vocal music presented in a series of 18 concerts. Tampere: various venues, 10-14 April, www.tampere.fi/biennale

TURNBABLE HELL

Quebecois turntableist Martin Tétreault leads an ensemble of extreme DJs, including Otomo Yoshihide, Jarek Schaeffer, Steve Nouri, Paul Hood and Leslie B. in a new compilation. A CMJ tour supported by The Wire. Starting the tomorrow (14 May), Newcastle Arts Centre (15), Hull: Adelphi (16), Manchester: Band On The Wall (17), Colchester Arts Centre (18), London: Queen Elizabeth Hall (20), Reading: 21 South Street Arts Centre (21), Brighton: Concorde (22), Farnham: Ashcroft Arts Centre (23), Exeter: Phoenix (24). Info: www.cmtours.org.uk

Out There items for inclusion in the April issue should reach us by Friday 8 March. Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, bt@magazines.co.uk

All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone □

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 97.90 FM

JOHN PEEL

Monday: Thursday 10pm-midnight

The radio network's indie

GILLIES PETERSON

Monday: Wednesday 2am, Peel: April 2am

FABIO & GROVERIDER

Friday 2am, Wednesday: 11pm-1am

WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 11pm-2am, Saturday 9pm-midnight

Monday: 10am

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday: midnight-2am, Best: culture

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight

New Music compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm, Archive: recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10:15-11:30pm: World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

UK WILD ROUTES

to 10pm

Doesn't pretend to be knowledge of global music

JAZZ LIFE

Saturday 8-10pm

Contemporary repertoire

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10:30pm-1am, New Music: magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight

Hyper-electric mix of avant sounds

Regional

BBC LANSHIRE

96.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 88.5 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 8-10pm, Steve Barker: indie & up: eclectic

BBC MERSEYSIDE

96.8 FM, 148.5 MW

PMS

Sunday: midnight-2am, Eclectic mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM SEBOP TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7:25pm, Sunday 10:25pm-midnight

Jazz and hi-beats

CABLE RADIO 90.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight, Eclectic: avant mix

KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight, Eclectic: post-rock

FROST AND HYPE

Sunday 5-6pm, Jungle

A HERO

Monday 2-4pm, John: indie & up: eclectic

MATT JAM: LAMONT

Wednesday 2-4pm, More: eclectic: culture

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

SOLID STEEL

Monday: midnight-2am

Not mixed from the New York mix

CHARLIE GILLET

Saturday 5-10pm, World Music, roots and R&B

RANKIN' MISS P: ROOMS & BLUES

Saturday 10pm-midnight, Static: roots

XFM 104.9 (LONDON)

FLO-MOTION

Sunday 9pm-midnight, Leftfield: electronic

SOFTWARE //

bios 02
PRESS PLAY!

PONG
ASTEROIDS
SPACE INVADERS
ARKANOID
PACMAN
TETRIS
DOUBLE DRAGON
PACMAN 3D
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT
GRANTOURISMO 3

HARDWARE //

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MICROSOFT XBOX
NINTENDO GAMEBOY ADVANCE
ZX SPECTRUM 48K
COMMODORE 64
1977 XMAS ATARI VCS

AUDIO //

VLADISLAV DELAY
PAN SONIC
FURUKAWA
FENNESZ
ADULT
PREFUSE 73
POPTRAUME
CHICKS ON SPEED
RALPH STEINBRUEHL

MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED

12_28 OF APRIL 02//ATHENS GREECE



www.biosfighter.com/e-mail bios@biosfighter.com

3 - 6 May 2002
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1

freedom of the city 2002

- a festival of radical improvised music -

FRIDAY EVENING (May 3rd 19:00)

PROCESSION 1:

Anthony Guerra (electric guitar), Roberto Filizola (piano), Sandy Kindness (tenor saxophone & bass clarinet), Sue Lynch (tenor saxophone), Romuald Wadych (bass guitar/electronics)
MATT DAVIE (trumpet) & MARK WATTELL (cello)
MAGGIE NICOLS 'NUTS IN MAY' feeds from The Gathering: freely improvised music, plus 'Collage' pieces by John Stevens selected and arranged by Maggie Nichols (personnel to be announced)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON (May 4th 15:00)

CHRIS BURN (trumpet) & MATTHEW HUTCHINSON

(synthesizers/keyboards)

ROGER SMITH (solo guitar)

BIRDYAK: Bob Cobbing (voice), Lil Cowhill (soprano saxophone), Hugh Metcalfe (guitar), Jennifer Pike (movement)

LOUIS MIDHOLD GROUP: Francine Luce (voice), Jason Verde (alto saxophone), Vervan Weston (piano), John Edwards (double bass), Louis Hahelo (percussion)

SATURDAY EVENING (May 4th 19:30)

PHIL HINTON (voice) & ROGER TURNER (percussion)

TREVOR WATTS (soprano & alto saxophones) & VERVAN WESTON (piano)

SYLVIA HALLETT (violin, voice, bicycle wheel, strings, saw, etc)

EVAN PARKER (soprano saxophone) & JOHN RUSSELL (guitar)

SUNDAY AFTERNOON (May 5th 15:00)

RESPONCE: Kari Aufemenn, Anselm Cominada, Serra Melistad & Sarah Washington (electronics)

CHARLOTTE HUG (voice/electronics) & ARI THORAS (keyboards/electronics)

FM: Adam Bohman (amplified objects), Jacques Pascha (clarinets), Robert Jarvis (trombone)

LOL COXHILL (soprano saxophone), PAUL RUTHERFORD (trombone) & IAN SMITH (trumpet)

SUNDAY EVENING (May 5th 19:30)

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA performing free improvisations and pieces directed by Steve Beresford (featuring Paul Rutherford), Terry Day, Simon H Fell, Caroline Knebel, Paul Rutherford & Dave Tucker as well as a piece by John Stevens (personnel to be announced)

MONDAY AFTERNOON (May 6th 15:00)

ANTON LUKOSTEJIEV (cello) & EDDIE PREVOST (percussion)

PROCESSION 2: Tim Blackwell (tenor saxophone), Denis Dubovtsev (soprano saxophone), Tim Goldie (percussion), Ross Lambert (electric guitar), Mattin (laptop/samples), Michael Rogers (bass guitar)
TOM CHANT (soprano saxophone), PATRICK CARPENTER (turntables) & IVAN SEAL (computer)

MONDAY EVENING (May 6th 19:30)

JOHN TILBURY (piano)

a. 'There's Something in There' solo piano text by Ken Edwards

b. 'Seconds' text by Samuel Beckett

MARIANTHI PAPALEXANDRI PROJECT: Three improvisatory visual, sound and performance pieces: with Sebastian Lexter, Ed Nelson, Yue-Jy Hu and Maranthi Papalexandri

NATHANIEL CATCHPOLE (tenor saxophone), JAMIE COLEMAN (trumpet), JOHN EDWARDS (double bass) & EDDIE PREVOST (drums)

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www.bbe.co.uk/radio3

www.matchlessrecordings.com

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Brief History

Strut was founded in January 1990 by Quintessence. After initially setting up Hermosa, Quintessence set up an independent label devoted to new concepts in black catalogue dance compilations. Strut's pledge is to provide high quality compilations with no fluff, its debut release in June 1999, *Club Africa*, was reportedly received by critics and was immediately snapped up by the funk-hungry dancefloor massive. Some of the key releases in the last couple of years are as follows: *Music For Dancers* (innovative music directions from DJ's Larry Funky music source), *Original Dreams* (remixes/producer DJ Paga's selection of funk grooves and rare, beat-shaking bawls), *Also Funk Afro Beat*, Orlando Julius's *Super Afro Soul*, the *Glass Roads* DJ mix series, with selections by Ashley Beedle and former New York *Roy DJ Denny Knit*; the underground disco series

featuring Larry Levan (the Godfather of DJ culture, with a recording from the legendary *Piedra Garage*), *Disco Not Disco* (the first in a series of fascinating investigations into New York's downtown scene of the late 70s and early 80s, when post-punk sounds inspired wave and innovation into clubland); *The Official Adventures Of Grand Master Flash*

Statement Of Intent

To provide the best in original funk, jazz, disco, Latin and Afro-beat, and to document some of the key areas of dance music history. To bring you the long buried nuggets and hard to find gems which pepper the illustrious history of soulful music. To redress and honour some of the neglected artists who have dedicated their talents to the advancement of the Funk

Other activities

Strut launched the first ever exhibition about Larry Levan and the *Piedra Garage* in London 2000. In the same year, we were the first label to bring legendary New York DJ Denny Knit over to London. We made a documentary film, included in the

Nigella 70 album, featuring exclusive interviews with many of the key figures in Lagos in the 70s, from King Sunny Ade and Ebenezer Obey to Ginger Baker (Cream), Ray Avon, Fela and Femi Kuti. One-off Strut parties such as Grand Master Flash's first London appearance in more than ten years; *Piedra Garage* party with David Deffen, one of the original 70s *Piedra Garage* DJs. Strut also has its own team of DJs, who promote the label worldwide

Future Plans

Grand Master Flash tour (April), Oneness Of Juu European tour (May-June); Nigella 70 Allstars UK Tour (November), *Disco Not Disco* in March and April; Signer Budino: *Revolution*; *Disco Not Disco* 2, with Laid Back, Eddy Grant, Can, Bill Laswell, Yello and Arthur Russell; *Oneness Of Juu: African Rhythms and Space Jungle* (LW); Peter King: *Shango*

Choice Cuts

Nigella 70, *Yellow*; *Disco Not Disco*

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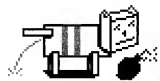
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Epiphanies

When Louise Gray was in a black hole, Marc Almond's torch songs showed her the light



Blending heart: Marc Almond

The evening couldn't have had less auspicious beginnings. Driving down from an early Christmas party in North London, there was a sudden flurry of traffic. A gaping crowd were gathering. Two cars had careened across the road; one was on an angle up on the pavement. A motorcycle lay between the two. Someone – a witness? – was screaming, a long silent howl that I visualised rather than heard, although there was no mistaking its tenor. Another was laying a coat over something in the road. A few yards off, linked only to this shape by a slew of viscous darkness – it's Nick Cave's line about "a warm arterial spray" that incongruously springs to mind now – was a head. The blood shone purple, reflecting a neon shop sign, I remember. There were blue lights approaching. The police, the medics, the fire tenders. An officer waved me by.

To be brutal, I was already numb. In a freetail anchored only by the small duties – a large end-of-year pile of reviews I was writing for the NME I had been that way for the past week. It was 1987. It was 30, more gauche than I care to admit to. A long relationship had ended abruptly and cruelly. The culprit had legged it to New York from where he amused himself by leaving death threats on my answering machine. I'd lost something like a stone in days. Colleagues perhaps sensed that work could provide a postmortem frame to help restructure my life, day by day, album by album, although one did question whether it really was a good idea – given Marc Almond's perennial theme of love lost – that I review the singer's gig that weekend at London's Astoria Theatre.

It was an odd one for me to insist on. Much of 1986 and 1987 were spent in pursuit of the new dance records coming out of Chicago and Detroit. It was the glistening, well-aimed instrumentals – Laurent X and Donnell May, especially – that really got me. Here were tracks that said more without words than any song. They were dark, interior soundtracks that allowed the listener their own onic space. I had been impressed by Marc Almond's recent solo work – *Stones Of Johnny*, *Mother Fier* – and I'd liked the older Soft Cell stuff well enough, but I was edging towards a position where the song, that old format, was past its sell-by

date. Words, yelping and moaning their way through little verses, were expediting their distance between representation and meaning. The events of that December only accelerated the process in me. When the boxed set of Philip Glass's ancient Egyptian opera, *Akhmenet*, was released – just a week before Almond's gig – I was drawn immediately to the work's final act, where the ghostly Pharaonic family shed language in favour of melismatic lines flavoured with a chilling poignancy. Here's a place where language fails, where its insufficiency to express the dense blackness inside of one is laid bare. I knew it. I was there.

I hadn't seen Almond perform before and I can't remember my first glimpse of him. I was aware that, on the first songs, the voice could crack or wobble, and I wondered what he was straining towards. Bobbing my head (the venue had sold out weeks in advance) to get a view of the stage, I could see him now: a small, skinny guy, tense in his delivery. And then something changed. The idiosyncratic modulations no longer mattered. There, in front of me was nothing less than a transformation. Was it during Almond's cover of Jacques Brel's "If You Go Away"? I think so. Almond inserts a long pause before its final verse, a jawdropping pastiche of garily masquerading as its plea pulls out the listener's heart. That night, Almond packed everything – fragility, anguish, the pain of a body which, in its animal strength, continues to survive – into a few lines. It was extraordinary. This scintilla guy on stage had managed, by dint of what natural technical ability he owned, to move everything onto a new level. Almond seemed to draw the dark lights into himself, you forgot the group altogether. This was a performance that transcended his own talents and there was potent beauty in the song's interpretation. One should never sing the great torch songs lightly, the gut emotion they require is impervious to fakery.

That performance made sense in the way that I couldn't have anticipated. These were love songs about the absence of love, and they ripped away at that wiful deceit with which we like to clothe romance. Love conquers all? No, it doesn't. This is for ever. Even forever ends. It was nothing less than a wake up call – that with an implicit message of survival attached.

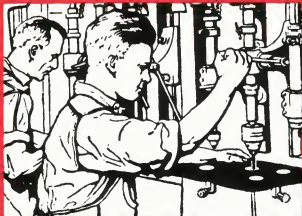
I've seen Almond several times since 1987, but that connection I felt the first time seemed to be missing. Maybe it was just me, I couldn't tell. The Royal Albert Hall gigs in 1993 were fun, but too grandiose to affect me in any lasting way. His subsequent releases had great moments, although studio production could flatten the emotional content. I realised that with Almond, the imperfections are one of his greatest strengths and it's only on stage that you experience their transfiguration. When it occurs – and it's by no means a given – it's magical.

What I love about Almond's performances is that they can be tremendously flawed. Things go wrong. In December 2001, I got my second chance. At the last of two shows staged in the Gothic splendour of London's Union Chapel, a punter wanted to duet with Almond on "What Makes A Man A Man?"; the singer had a hissy fit and then forgot his lines. An uneasiness rippled through the crowd. And then, from somewhere, it all came together. "I Created Me" – a sinewy, defiant declaration of the self-constructed man – presaged the show's denouement: a whining, tauntly controlled version of Mother Fier's "Saint Judy". Anyone half-naïve in the pulpit, bathed in blue light and a pugilistic electro-beat and singing a song about doomed drags, would make an arresting sight, but this was beyond mere staging. Almond's hymn was by turns, languid, loving, sleazy. The magnificent moment need only last a second – a sweeping line, a glance, a gesture – but when it comes, you can't fail to recognise it. It's powerful, shocking, wonderful. "Saint Judy" had the direction and the vision that its subject had lost. It dilated, stretching in a faux narcotic phase, into sketches of other tunes – predictably "Somewhere Over The Rainbow", less predictably, "Kinky Afro" – before returning to form and the singer.

Almond should have ended after "Saint Judy", but gave a queen a pupil and you know you're in for a long haul. The encores, conducted in a haze of sequins and greatest hits, well, it would be callous to deny him. Even if one phrase of one song changes the way you walk through the world, then movement, and by extension, life, has been affirmed.

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DOMINO

A SNAPSHOT FROM THE 2002 DOMINO TEN-DAY



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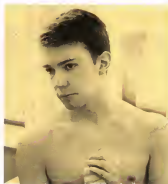
The annual Domino festival is curated and hosted by Brussels's Ancienne Belgique venue. "Musically we search outside the margins of today's pop music," say the organisers, explaining the festival's booking policy. "In music terms: avant-hop, turntablism, clicks + cuts, alternative Country, drum 'n' bass, electronica; basically acts/artists that have their own identity." In keeping with this approach, the line-up for this year's event, which takes place between 10-21 April, includes Godspeed You! Black Emperor!, Do Make Say Think, Le Tigre, DAT Politics, Lambchop, Cannibal Ox and Mike Ladd, as well as two nights of Belgian electronica,

label showcases, video screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art culled from *The Wire*'s 2001 Invisible London expo. To mark the festival, the organisers have compiled a special 14 track CD, featuring Uskó Orchestra, Do Make Say Think, Styrofoam, Le Tigre, Anton Ponce, Cannibal Ox, King Tubby & Soul Syndicate, Stereotype & Soothsayer, Fridge, Monguito, Eavesdropper, Timebold, Rudy Troune and The Syncopated Elevators Legacy, which is given away to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with this month's issue. For more details on the Domino festival, see this month's Out There section, or go to www.abconcerts.be

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